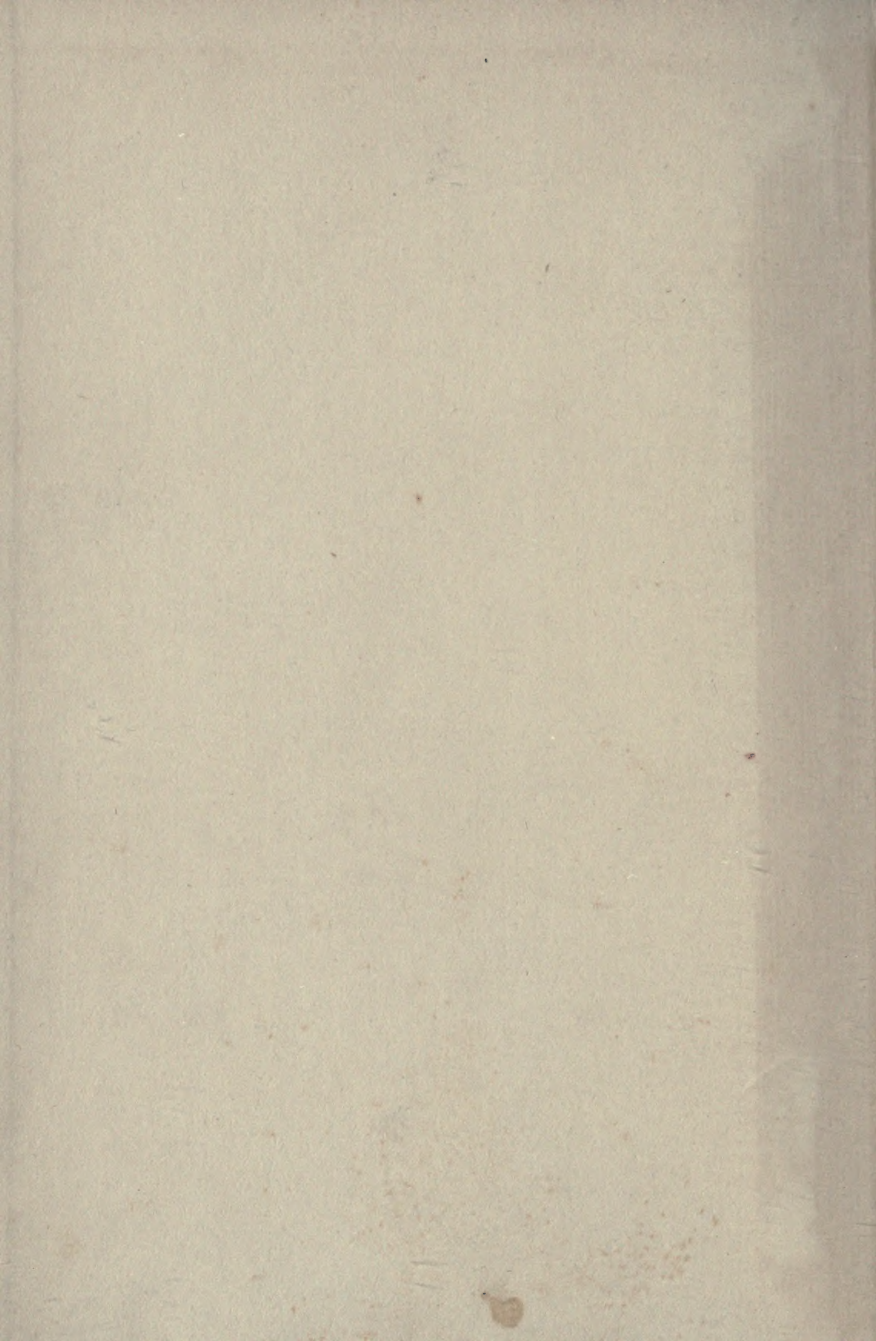




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# THE GREAT VALLEY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS











THE GREAT VALLEY



THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK • BOSTON • CHICAGO • DALLAS  
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MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED  
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TORONTO

# THE GREAT VALLEY

*By*

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

AUTHOR OF "SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY"

"SONGS AND SATIRES," ETC.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1916

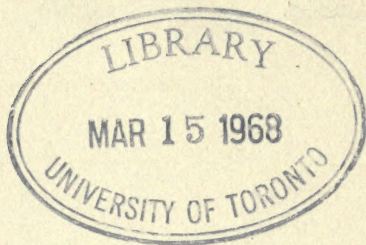
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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
SQUIRE DAVIS AND LUCINDA MASTERS

WHO, CLOSE TO NATURE, ONE IN DEEP RELIGIOUS FAITH, THE OTHER  
IN PANTHEISTIC RAPTURE AND HEROISM, LIVED NEARLY A  
HUNDRED YEARS IN THIS LAND OF ILLINOIS

I INSCRIBE  
THE GREAT VALLEY

IN ADMIRATION OF THEIR GREAT STRENGTH, MASTERY  
OF LIFE, HOPEFULNESS, CLEAR AND  
BEAUTIFUL DEMOCRACY

EDGAR LEE MASTERS





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# THE GREAT VALLEY

## I

### FORT DEARBORN

Here the old Fort stood  
When the river bent southward.  
Now because the world pours itself into Chicago  
The Lake runs into the river  
Past docks and switch-yards,  
And under bridges of iron.

Sand dunes stretched along the lake for miles.  
There was a great forest in the Loop.  
Now Michigan Avenue lies  
Between miles of lights,  
And the Rialto blazes  
Where the wolf howled.

In the loneliness of the log-cabin,  
Across the river,  
The fur-trader played his fiddle  
When the snow lay  
About the camp of the Pottawatomies  
In the great forest.  
Now to the music of the Kangaroo Hop,  
And Ragging the Scale,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And La Seduccion,  
The boys and girls are dancing  
In a cafe near Lake Street.

The world is theirs now.  
There is neither a past nor a to-morrow,  
Save of dancing.  
Nor do they know that behind them  
In the seed not yet sown  
There are eyes which will open upon Chicago,  
And feet which will blossom for the dance,  
And hands which will reach up  
And push them into the silence  
Of the old fiddler.

They threw a flag  
Over the coffin of Lieutenant Farnum  
And buried him back of the Fort  
In ground where now  
The spice mills stand.  
And his little squaw with a baby  
Sat on the porch grieving  
While the band played.  
Then hands pushing the world  
Buried a million soldiers and afterward  
Pale multitudes swept through the Court-house  
To gaze for the last time  
Upon the shrunken face of Lincoln.



## FORT DEARBORN

And the fort at thirty-fifth street vanished.  
And where the Little Giant lived  
They made a park  
And put his statue  
Upon a column of marble.  
Now the glare of the steel mills at South Chicago  
Lights the bronze brow of Douglas.  
It is his great sorrow  
Haunting the Lake at mid-night.

When the South was beaten  
They were playing  
John Brown's body lies mouldering in the Grave,  
And Babylon is Fallen and Wake Nicodemus.  
Now the boys and girls are dancing  
To the Merry Whirl and Hello Frisco  
Where they waltzed in crinoline  
When the Union was saved.

There was the Marble Terrace  
Glory of the seventies!  
They wrecked it,  
And brought colors and figures  
From later Athens and Pompeii  
And put them on walls.  
And beneath panels of red and gold,  
And shimmering tesserae,  
And tragic masks and comic masks,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And wreaths and bucrania,  
Upon mosaic floors  
Red lipped women are dancing  
With dark men.  
Some sit at tables drinking and watching,  
Amorous in an air of French perfumes.

Like ships at mid-night  
The kingdoms of the world  
Know not whither they go nor to what port.  
Nor do you, embryo hands,  
In the seed not yet sown  
Know of the wars to come.

They may fill the sky with armored dragons  
And the waters with iron monsters;  
They may build arsenals  
Where now upon marble floors  
The boys and girls  
Are dancing the Alabama Jubilee,  
The processional of time is a falling stream  
Through which you thrust your hand.  
And between the dancers and the silence forever  
There shall be the livers  
Gazing upon the torches they have lighted,  
And watching their own which are failing,  
And crying for oil,  
And finding it not!

## CAPTAIN JOHN WHISTLER

### II

## CAPTAIN JOHN WHISTLER

*(Captain John Whistler built Fort Dearborn in 1803.  
His son, George Washington, who was an engineer  
and built a railroad in Russia for the Czar in 1842,  
was the father of the artist, James Abbott McNeill  
Whistler.)*

Throw logs upon the fire! Relieve the guard  
At the main gate and wicket gate! Lieutenant  
Send two men 'round the palisades, perhaps  
They'll find some thirsty Indians loitering  
Who may think there is whiskey to be had  
After the wedding. Get my sealing wax!  
Now let me see "November, eighteen four:  
Dear Jacob: On this afternoon my daughter  
Was married to James Abbott, it's the first  
Wedding of white people in Chicago —  
That's what we call Fort Dearborn now and then.  
They left at once on horseback for Detroit."  
The "Tracy" will sail in to-morrow likely.  
"To Jacob Kingsbury"— that's well addressed.  
Don't fail to give this letter to the captain,  
That it may reach Detroit ere they do.  
I wonder how James Abbott and my Sarah  
Will fare three hundred miles of sand and marsh,



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And tangled forest in this hard November?  
More logs upon the fire! The mist comes down!  
The lake roars like a wind, and not a star  
Lights up the blackness. They have almost reached  
The Calumet by now. Good luck James Abbott!  
I'm glad my Sarah wed so brave a man,  
And one so strong of arm.

It's eighteen four,  
It's almost eighteen five. It's twenty years  
Since I was captured when Burgoyne was whipped  
At Saratoga. Why, it's almost twenty  
Since I became an American soldier. Now  
Here am I builder of this frontier fort,  
And its commander! Aged now forty-nine.  
But in my time a British soldier first,  
Now an American; first resident  
Of Ireland, then England, Maryland,  
Now living here. I see the wild geese fly  
To distant shores from distant shores and wonder  
How they endure such strangeness. But what's that  
To man's adventures, change of home, what's that  
To my unsettled life? Why there's La Salle:  
They say La Salle in sixteen seventy-one  
Was here, and now it's almost eighteen five.  
And what's your wild geese to La Salle! He's born  
At Rouen, sails the seas, and travels over  
Some several thousand miles through Canada.

## CAPTAIN JOHN WHISTLER

Is here exploring portages and rivers.  
Ends up at last down by the Rio Grande,  
And dies almost alone half way around  
The world from where he started. There's a man!  
May some one say of me: There was a man! . . .

I'm lonely without Sarah, without James.  
Tom bring my pipe and that tobacco bag.  
Here place my note to Jacob Kingsbury  
There on the shelf — remember, to the captain  
When the "Tracy" comes. Draw, boys, up to the fire  
I'll tell you what a wondrous dream I had,  
And woke with on my Sarah's wedding day. . . .

I had an uncle back in Ireland  
Who failed at everything except his Latin.  
He could spout Virgil till your head would ache.  
And when I was a boy he used to roll  
The Latin out, translating as he went:  
The ghost of Hector comes before Æneas,  
And warns him to leave Troy. His mother Venus  
Tells him to settle in another land!  
The Delphic oracle misunderstood,  
Æneas goes to Crete. He finds at last  
His ships are fired by the Trojan women,  
Great conflagration! Down he goes to hell,  
And then the Sibyl shows him what's to be:  
What race of heroes shall descend from him,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And how a city's walls he shall up-build  
In founding Rome. . . .

So last night in my dream  
This uncle came to me and said to me :  
“‘Aeneas’ Whistler you shall found a city.  
You’ve built Fort Dearborn, that is the beginning.  
Imperial Rome could be put in a corner  
Of this, the city which you’ll found. Fear not  
The wooden horse, but have a care for cows :  
I see ships burning on your muddy Tiber,  
And toppling walls.” I dreamed I felt the heat.  
But then a voice said “Where’s your little boy  
George Washington ?” — come sit on father’s knee,  
And hear about my dream — there little boy !  
Well, as I said, I felt the heat and then  
I felt the cruelest cold and then the voice :  
“You cannot come to Russia with your boy,  
He’ll make his way.” I woke up with these words,  
And found the covers off and I was cold.  
And then no sooner did I fall asleep  
Than this old uncle re-appeared and said :  
“A race of heroes shall descend from you,  
Here shall a city stand greater than Rome.”  
With that he seemed to alter to a witch,  
A woman’s form, the voice of him changed too,  
And said : “I’m Mother Shipton, Captain Whistler.  
“Men through the mountains then shall ride,



## CAPTAIN JOHN WHISTLER

“Nor horse nor ass be by their side” —  
Think, gentlemen, what it would be to ride  
In carriages propelled by steam! And then  
This dream became a wonder in a wonder  
Of populous streets, of flying things, of spires  
Of driven mist that looked like fiddle strings  
From tree to tree. Of smoke-stacks over-topping  
The tallest pine; of bridges built of levers,  
And such a haze of smoke, and cloud like shapes  
Passing along like etchings one by one:  
Cathedrals, masts as thick as hazel thickets,  
And buildings great as hills, and miles of lights.  
Till by some miracle the sun had moved,  
And rose not in the east but in the south.  
And shone along the shore line of the Lake,  
As he shines o’er the Lake when he arises,  
And makes an avenue of gold, no less  
This yellow sand took glory of his light.  
And where he shone it seemed an avenue,  
And over it, where now the dunes stretch south,  
Along the level shore of sand, there stood  
These giant masses, etchings as it were!  
And Mother Shipton said: “This is your city.  
“A race of heroes shall descend from you;  
“Your son George Washington shall do great deeds.  
“And if he had a son what would you name him?”  
Well, as I went to sleep with thoughts of Sarah  
And praises for James Abbott, it was natural

## THE GREAT VALLEY

That I should say "I'd name him after James."  
"Well done" said Mother Shipton and then vanished. . . .

I woke to find the sun-light in my room,  
And from my barracks window saw the Lake  
Stirred up to waves slate-colored by the wind;  
Some Indians loitering about the fort.  
They knew this was James Abbott's wedding day,  
And Sarah's day of leaving.

Soldiers! Comrades!  
What is most real, our waking hours, our dreams?  
Where was I in this sleep? What are our dreams  
But lands which lie below our hour's horizon,  
Yet still are seen in a reflecting sky,  
And which through earth and heaven draw us on?  
Look at me now! Consider of yourselves:  
Housed, fed, yet lonely, in this futile task  
By this great water, in this waste of grass,  
Close to this patch of forest, on this river  
Where wolves howl, and the Indian waits his chance —  
Consider of your misery, your sense  
Of worthless living, living to no end:  
I tell you no man lives but to some end.  
He may live only to increase the mass  
Wherewith Fate is borne-down, or just to swell  
The needed multitude when the hero passes,  
To give the hero heart! But every man

## CAPTAIN JOHN WHISTLER

Walks, though in blindness, to some destiny  
Of human growth, who only helps to fill,  
And helps that way alone, the empty Fate  
That waits for lives to give it Life.

And look

Here are we housed and fed, here is a fire  
And here a bed. A hundred years ago  
Marquette, La Salle, scarce housed and poorly fed  
Gave health and life itself to find the way  
Through icy marshes, treacherous swamps and forests  
For this Fort Dearborn, where to-night we sit  
Warming ourselves against a roaring hearth.  
And what's our part? It is not less than theirs.  
And what's the part of those to come? Not less  
Than ours has been! And what's the life of man?  
To live up to the God in him, to obey  
The Voice which says: You shall not live and rest.  
Nor sleep, nor mad delight nor senses fed,  
Nor memory dulled, nor tortured hearing stopped  
To drown my Voice shall leave you to forget  
Life's impulse at the heart of Life, to strive  
For men to be, for cities, nobler states  
Moving foreshadowed in your dreams at night,  
And realized some hundred years to come.  
When this Fort Dearborn, you and all of you,  
And I who sit with pipe and son on knee,  
Regretting a dear daughter, who this hour

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Is somewhere in the darkness (like our souls  
Which move in darkness, listening to the beat  
Of our mysterious hearts, or with closed eyes  
Sensing a central Purpose) shall be dust —  
Our triumphs, sorrows, even our names forgotten.  
And all we knew lost in the wreck and waste  
And change of things. And even what we did  
For cities, nobler states, and greater men  
Forgotten too. It matters not. We work  
For cities, nobler states and greater men,  
Or else we die in Life which is the death  
Which soldiers must not die!

### III

#### EMILY BROSSEAU: IN CHURCH

*Domine, Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, libera animas omnium  
fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni, et de pro-  
fundo lacu.*

Leave me now and I will watch here through the night,  
And I'll put in new candles, if these fail.  
I'll sit here as I am, where I can see  
His brow, his nose's tip and thin white hair,  
And just beyond his brow, above the altar,  
The red gash in the side of Jesus like  
A candle's flame when burning to the socket.  
Go all of you, and leave me. I don't care



## EMILY BROSSEAU: IN CHURCH

How cold the church grows. Michael Angelo  
Went to a garret, which was cold, and stripped  
His feet, and painted till the chill of death  
Took hold of him, a man just eighty-seven,  
And I am ninety, what's the odds? — go now . . .

Now Jean we are alone! Your very stillness  
Is like intenser life, as in your brow  
Your soul was crystallized and made more strong,  
And nearer to me. You are here, I feel you.  
I close my eyes and feel you, you are here.  
Therefore a little talk before the dawn,  
Which will come soon. Dawn always comes too soon  
In times like this. It waits too long in times  
Of absence, and you will be absent soon. . . .

I want to talk about my happiness,  
My happy life, the part you played in it.  
There never was a day you did not kiss me  
Through nearly seventy years of married life.  
I had two hours of heaven in my life.  
The first one was the dance where first we met.  
The other when last fall they brought me roses,  
Those ninety roses for my birth-day, when  
They had me tell them of the first Chicago  
I saw when just a child, about the Fort;  
The cabins where the traders lived, who worked,  
And made the fortune of John Jacob Astor.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Poor Jean ! It's scarce a week since you were struck.  
You sat down in your chair, 'twas after dinner,  
Then suddenly I saw your head fall forward.  
You could not speak when I went over to you.  
But afterwards when you were on the bed  
I leaned above you and you took the ribbon,  
That hung down from my cap and pressed it trembling  
Against your lips. What triumph in your death !  
Your death was like a mass, mysterious, rich  
Like Latin which the priests sing and the choir —  
May angels take you and with Lazarus,  
Once poor, receive you to eternal rest. . . .  
Two hours of heaven in my life that's true !  
And years between that made life more than good.  
My first sight of Chicago stands for all  
My life became for you and all I've lived.  
The year is 1829, you know of course.  
I've told you of the trip in Prairie schooners  
From Ft. Detroit round the lake, we camped '  
Along the way, the last time near the place  
Where Gary and the steel mills are to-day.  
And the next morning what a sky ! as blue  
As a jay's wing, with little rifts of snow  
Along the hollows of the yellow dunes,  
And some ice in the lake, which lapped a little,  
And purplish colors far off in the north.  
So round these more than twenty miles we drove  
That April day. And when we came as far

## EMILY BROSSEAU: IN CHURCH

As thirty-ninth or thirty-first perhaps —  
Just sand hills then — I never can forget it —  
What should I see? Fort Dearborn dazzling bright,  
All newly white-washed right against that sky,  
And the log cabins round it, far away  
The rims of forests, and between a prairie  
With wild flowers in the grasses red and blue —  
Such wild flowers and such grasses, such a sky,  
Such oceans of sweet air, in which were rising  
Straight up from Indian wigwams spires of smoke,  
About where now the Public Library stands  
On Randolph Street. And as we neared the place  
There was the flag, a streaming red and white  
Upon a pole within the Fort's inclosure.  
I cried for happiness though just a child,  
And cry now thinking. . . .

I must set this candle  
To see your pale brow better! What's the hour?  
The night is passing, and I have so much  
To say to you before the dawn. . . .

Well, then  
The first hour that I call an hour of heaven:  
Who was that man that built the first hotel? —  
It stood across the river from the Fort —  
No matter. But before that I had heard  
Nothing beside a fiddle, living here

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Amid the traders eleven years or so.  
And this man for his hotel's opening  
Had brought an orchestra from somewhere. Think  
Bass viols, violins, and horns and flutes.  
I'm dressed up like a princess for those days.  
I'm sixteen years of age and pass the door,  
Enter the ball-room where such candle-light  
As I had never seen shone on me, they  
Bored sockets in suspended wheels of wood  
And hung them from the ceiling, chandeliers!  
And at that moment all the orchestra  
Broke into music, yes, it was a waltz!  
And in that moment — what a moment-full!  
This hotel man presented you and said  
You were my partner for the evening. Jean  
I call this heaven, for its youth and love!  
I'm sixteen and you're twenty and I love you.  
I slip my arm through yours for you to lead me,  
You are so strong, so ruddy, kind and brave.  
I want you for a husband, for a friend,  
A guide, a solace, father to the child  
That I can bear. Oh Jean how can I talk so  
In this lone church at mid-night of such things,  
With all these candles burning round your face.  
I who have rounded ninety-years, and look  
On what was sweet, long seventy years ago?  
Feeling this city even at mid-night move  
In restlessness, desire, around this church,



## EMILY BROSSEAU: IN CHURCH

Where once I saw the prairie grass and flowers ;  
And saw the Indians in their colored trappings  
Pour from a bottle of whisky on the fire  
A tribute to the Spirit of the world,  
And dance and sing for madness of that Spirit ?

Well, Jean, my other hour. I've spoken before  
Of our long life together glad and sad,  
But mostly good. I'm happy for it all.  
This other hour is marked, I call it heaven  
Just as I told you, not because they stood  
Around me as a mystery from the past,  
And looked at me admiringly for my age,  
My strength in age, my life that spanned the growth  
Of my Chicago from a place of huts,  
Just four or five, a fort, and all around it  
A wilderness, to what it is this hour  
Where most three million souls are living, nor  
Because I saw this rude life, and beheld  
The World's Fair where such richnesses of time  
Were spread before me — not because of these,  
Nor for the ninety roses, nor the tribute  
They paid me in them, nor their gentle words —  
These did not make that hour a heaven, no —  
Jean, it was this :

First I was just as happy  
As I was on that night we danced together.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And that I could repeat that hour's great bliss  
At ninety years, though in a different way,  
And for a different cause, that was the thing  
That made me happy. For you see it proves,  
Just give the soul a chance it's happiness  
Is endless, let the body house it well,  
Or house it ill, but give it but a chance  
To speak itself, not stifle it, or hush it  
With hands of flesh against the quivering strings,  
Made sick or weak by time, the soul will find  
Delights as good as youth has to the end.  
And even if the flesh be sick there's Heine:  
Few men had raptures keen as his, though lying  
With death beside him through a stretch of years.  
It must be something in the soul as well,  
Which makes me think a third hour shall be mine  
In spite of death, yes Jean it must be so!  
I want that third hour, I shall pray for it  
Unceasingly, I want it for my soul's sake:  
Which will have happiness in its very power  
And dignity that time nor change can hurt.  
For if I have it you shall have it too.  
And in that third hour we shall give each other  
Something that's kindred to the souls we gave  
That night we danced together — but much more! . .

It's dawn! Good bye till then, my Jean, good bye!

## THE OUIJA BOARD

### IV

## THE OUIJA BOARD

*(David Kennison died in Chicago February 24th, 1852,  
aged 115 years, 3 months and 17 days. Veteran of  
the Revolution.)*

David Kennison is here born at Kingston in the year  
Seventeen thirty-seven and it's nineteen sixteen now,  
Dumped the tea into the harbor, saw Cornwallis'  
career  
End at Yorktown with the sullen thunder written  
on his brow.

Was at West Point when the traitor Arnold gave up  
the fort,  
Saw them hang Major Andre for a spy and his due.  
Settled down in Sackett's Harbor for a rest of a sort,  
Till I crossed the western country in the year forty-  
two.

And I saw Chicago rising in the ten years to come,  
Ere I passed in the fifties to the peace of the dead.  
Now where is there a city in the whole of Christendom  
Where such roar is and such walking is around a  
grave's head?

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Oh, 'twas fighting as a soldier in the wars of the land ;  
And 'twas giving and living to make the people free  
That kept me past a century an oak to withstand  
The heat and snow and weevils that break down a  
tree.

There were other dead around me with a slab to mark  
When they heaped the final pillow for my honor's  
meed.

Now the lovers stopping curiously in Lincoln Park  
Look at the bronze tablet on my boulder and read :

How I fought at Long Island and fought at White  
Plains —

What does it mean you lovers who scan what is  
scored

On the tablet on my boulder?—Why the task remains  
To make the torch brighter and to keep clean the  
sword.

Go labor for the future. Go make the cities great :

There are other realms to conquer for the men to  
be.

For it's toil and it's courage that solve a soul's fate,  
And it's giving and living that make a people free !



## HANGING THE PICTURE

### V

## HANGING THE PICTURE

Before you pull that string,  
And strip away that veil,  
I rise to enter my objection  
To the hanging of Archer Price's picture  
Here in this hall. . . .  
For I'll venture the artist has tried to soften  
The vain and shifty look of the eyes;  
And the face that looked like a harte-beest's,  
And the rabbit mouth that looked like a horse's,  
Lipping oats from a leather bag!

I knew this man in '28  
When he drifted here from Maine, he said.  
And now it's eighteen ninety two:  
This year is sacred to conquerors,  
Discoverers and soldiers.  
And I object to the hanging of pictures  
Of men who trade while others fight,  
And follow the army to get the loot,  
And rest till other men are tired,  
Then grab the spoils while the workers sleep.  
I would like to burn all masks,  
And padded shoes,  
And smash all dark lanterns.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And take all friends of the people  
And brand them with the letter "B,"  
Which means "Betrayed."  
And I would like to enter the Kingdom of Heaven  
Just to see the publicans who will be there,  
And the Archer Prices who will not be there!

You call him a great man,  
And a prophetic man,  
And a leader, and a savior,  
And a man who was wise in an evil world  
Of tangled interests and selfish power,  
And who knew the art of compromise,  
And how to get half when you can't get all!  
You haven't probed deep enough in this man.  
For he was great as the condor is great.  
And prophetic as the wolf is prophetic.  
And a leader as the jackal is a leader.  
And his wisdom was that of the python,  
Which will swallow a hare when no pig is at hand!

He was rich,  
He was well known,  
His name was linked with lofty things,  
And adorned all noble committees.  
And he was a friend of art and music —  
He gave them money!  
He was on the Library Board,

## HANGING THE PICTURE

And the Commerce Board, and every board  
For building up the city —  
I admit these things. They were pawns on the board  
for him.  
That's why I rise to enter my objection  
To hanging his picture here !

We had no telephones in those days.  
But there was a certain man of power,  
A man who was feared, as one might fear  
A lion that hides in the jungle.  
And this man sat in a hidden room  
As a banded-epira waits and watches.  
And he went from this room to his house in a cab,  
And back to this room in a cab.  
But everyone knew that Archer Price  
Was doing the will of the man in the room,  
Though you never saw the two together,  
As you never could see together the leaders  
Of some of these late bi-partisan deals.  
But Archer Price was so much alike  
This secret man in the room ;  
And did so much what we knew  
He wanted done, and built the city  
So near to the heart's desire of this man  
That all of us knew that the two conferred  
In spite of the fact that telephones  
Had never been heard of then. . . .

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Well, because of this man in the room,  
As well as because of Price himself,  
Everyone feared him, no one knew  
Exactly how to fight him.  
Everyone hated him, although  
Everyone helped him to wealth and power.  
He was what you'd call a touch-me-not.  
If you clodded him you ran the risk  
Of hitting the teacher, or maybe a child.  
He always walked with the wind to his back :  
If you spit at him it would fly in your face.  
And though we suspected more than we knew  
Of his subtle machinations,  
No one could attack him for what was known.  
Because the things he was known to be doing  
Were service to those, who couldn't allow  
The service to be imperiled.

There never was a time  
This man was out of public office.  
He clung to the people's treasury  
As a magnet clings to a magnet.  
Why didn't your orator tell this audience  
He started in life as town assessor ?  
That would have left me with nothing to say  
Except he traded the fixing of taxes  
For business !  
Oh, you people who unveil pictures !



## HANGING THE PICTURE

In his day no one was permitted to say this.  
And now everyone has forgotten it.  
It is useless to say it.  
And here in the year of Columbus  
You are unveiling his picture!

And you say the Illinois and Michigan Canal  
Had never been built or saved for the people  
Except for Archer Price!  
Why don't you tell that he fought the Canal in 1830,  
Saying it would burden the people?  
And why don't you say that even then  
He was acting for his own interests and the man in the  
room?  
Why don't you show that his art of compromise  
Created the Public Canal Committee  
When he failed to block the Canal,  
And failed of appointment as Canal Commissioner?  
Why don't you show that through that committee  
The squatters stole the wharves on the river?  
Why don't you show how his friends grew rich  
Through buying the lands at public sales  
Which were given to build the Canal,  
And which the Committee was pretending to conserve?  
Why don't you show that through that Committee,  
Pretending to be a friend of the people,  
He opened a fight at length on the squatters  
And won the fight, and won the wharves

## THE GREAT VALLEY

For himself and a clique of friends?

Why don't you tell —?

Cry me down if you will —

I object — I object —

## VI

### THE LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS DEBATES

Have you ever seen the Douglas monument

There in Chicago?

They say it's by the Lake,

With a column of marble a hundred feet high,

And a statue of The Little Giant on top,

With knit brows and lion face,

Like he used to look when debatin' with Linkern.

I want to go up to Chicago sometime,

To see that monument.

And some one told me

They carved on his marble coffin the words:

"Tell my children to obey the laws,

And uphold the constitution."

Well, they couldn't have put sadder words

On his coffin than that.

For it was tryin' to obey the laws and support the  
constitution

That killed him.

And why should his children do the same thing and die?

## THE LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS DEBATES

You young men of this day don't care,  
And you don't understand the old questions.  
But a man's life is always worth understanding,  
Especially a man's like The Little Giant.  
Now this was the point :  
There was that devilish thing slavery,  
And The Little Giant, as senator,  
Put through a bill for leaving it to the people  
Whether they would have slavery in Kansas or Nebraska,  
Or any other territory, and that was popular sovereignty —  
And sounds democratic ; but three years later  
Along comes the Supreme Court and says :  
The people of a territory must have slavery  
Whether they want it or not, because  
The constitution is for slavery, and it follows the flag !  
Well, there was The Little Giant  
Caught between the law and the constitution !  
And tryin' to obey 'em both !  
Or better still he was like Lem Reese's boy  
Who was standin' one time one foot on shore,  
And one in a skiff, baitin' a hook,  
And all at once Col. Lankford's little steamer  
Came along and bobbled the skiff ;  
And it started to glide out into the river, —  
Why the boy walked like a spread compass  
For a month.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

For the skiff was movin', and that's the law.  
And his other foot slipped on the slimy bank,  
And that's the constitution !

But if you want to consider a minute  
How Time plays tag with people,  
And how no one can tell  
When he'll be It, just think :  
There was Bill McKinley  
Who kept the old constitution's from goin' to the  
Philippines,  
And they elected him.  
And here was The Little Giant,  
Who wanted to send it everywhere,  
And they defeated him.  
So you see it depends on what it means  
Whether you want to keep it or send it.  
And nobody knows what it means —  
Not even judges.

But just the same them were great days.  
One time The Little Giant came here with Linkern  
And talked from the steps of the Court-house ;  
And you never saw such a crowd of people :  
Democrats, Whigs, and Locofocos,  
Know-nothings and Anti-masonics,  
Blue lights, Spiritualists, Republicans  
Free Soilers, Socialists, Americans — such a crowd.



## THE LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS DEBATES

Linkern's voice squeaked up high,  
And didn't carry.  
But Douglas !  
People out yonder in Proctor's Grove,  
A mile from the Court House steps,  
Could hear him roar and hear him say :  
"I'm going to trot him down to Egypt  
And see if he'll say the things he says  
To the black republicans in northern Illinois."  
It made you shiver all down your spine  
To see that face and hear that voice —  
And that was The Little Giant !

And then on the other hand there was  
Abe Linkern standing six foot four,  
As thin as a rail, with a high-keyed voice,  
And sometimes solemn, and sometimes comic  
As any clown you ever saw,  
And runnin' Col. Lankford's little steamer,  
As it were, you know, which would bobble the skiff,  
Which was the law ; and The Little Giant's other foot  
Would slip on the bank, which was the constitution.  
And you could almost hear him holler "ouch."  
And Linkern would say : This argument  
Of the Senator's is thin as soup  
Made from the shadow of a starved pigeon !  
And then the crowd would yell, and the cornet band  
Would play, and men would walk away and say :

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Linkern floored him. And others would say :  
He aint no match for The Little Giant.  
But I'll declare if I could decide  
Which whipped the other.  
For to let the people decide whether they wanted  
slavery  
Sounded good.  
And to have the constitution in force sounded good.  
And not to have any slavery at all sounded good.  
But so far as the law was concerned,  
And where it was, and what you could do with it  
It was like the shell game :  
Now you see the little ball and now you don't !  
Who's got a dollar to say where the little ball is ?

But when you try to obey the laws and support the  
constitution,  
It reminds me of a Campbellite preacher  
We had here years ago.  
And he debated with the Methodist preacher  
As to whether immersion or sprinkling  
Was the way to salvation.  
And the Campbellite preacher said :  
"The holy scripture says :  
'And Jesus when he was baptised  
Went up straightway out of the water.'  
And how could he come up out of the water  
If he wasn't in ?" asked the Campbellite preacher,

## THE LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS DEBATES

Pointing a long finger at the Methodist preacher.  
"And how could he be in without being immersed?"  
Well, the Campbellite preacher won the debate.  
But the next day Billy Bell,  
An infidel we had here,  
Met the Campbellite preacher and said:  
"I suppose it wouldn't be possible for a man  
To stand in water up to his knees  
And have water sprinkled on his head, would it?"  
And the Campbellite preacher said:  
"Get thee behind me Satan," and went on.  
Well Linkern was kind of an infidel,  
And The Little Giant got caught in his own orthodoxy,  
And his ability for debate led him into  
The complete persuading of himself.  
And by arguin' for the law  
He made Linkern appear  
As bein' against the law.

But just think, for a minute, young man:  
Here is The Little Giant the greatest figure in all the  
land  
And the wheel of fortune turns  
And he stands by Linkern's side and holds  
His hat while Linkern takes the oath  
As president!  
Then the war comes and his leadership  
Has left him, and millions who followed him

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Turn from him, and then Death comes,  
And sits by him and says: Your time's up!  
So I say when they put up that monument  
And carved those words upon it  
They had just as well have carved the words,  
"He took poison."

Which reminds me:

There was a family over at Dutchland  
Named Nitchie.  
And my boy writes me from college  
That there is a writer named Nitchie  
Who says — well I can't tell you just now.  
But if you'll look at things close  
You'll see that Linkern was against the legal law,  
And Douglas against the moral law so-called,  
And neither cared for the other's law —  
And that was the real debate!  
Linkern rode over laws to save the Union,  
And Douglas said he cared more for white supremacy  
Than anything else.  
Which being true, who can tell  
Who won the debates?  
Is it better to have the Union,  
Or better to have a master race?

I'll go over to the post-office now  
And see if there's a letter from my boy.



## VII

### AUTOCHTHON

In a rude country some four thousand miles  
From Charles' and Alfred's birthplace you were born,  
In the same year. But Charles and you were born  
On the same day, and Alfred six months later.  
Thus start you in a sense the race together. . . .  
Charles goes to Edinburgh, afterwards  
His father picks him for the ministry,  
And sends him off to Cambridge where he spends  
His time on beetles and geology,  
Neglects theology. Alfred is here  
Fondling a Virgil and a Horace.  
But you — these years you give to reading Æsop,  
The Bible, lives of Washington and Franklin,  
And Kirkham's grammar.

In 1830 Alfred prints a book  
Containing "Mariana," certain other  
Delicate, wind-blown bells of airy music.  
And in this year you move from Indiana  
And settle near Decatur, Illinois,  
Hard by the river Sangamon where fever  
And ague burned and shook the poor  
Swamp saffron creatures of that desolate land.  
While Alfred walks the flowering lanes of England,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And reads Theocritus to the song of larks  
You clear the forests, plow the stumpy land,  
Fight off the torments of mosquitoes, flies  
And study Kirkham's grammar.

In 1831 Charles takes a trip  
Around the world, sees South America,  
And studies living things in Galapagos,  
Tahiti, Keeling Island and Tasmania.  
In 1831 you take a trip  
Upon a flat-boat down to New Orleans  
Through hardships scarcely less than Joliet  
And Marquette knew in 1673,  
Return on foot to Orfutt's store at Salem.

By this time Jacques Rousseau was canonized ;  
Jefferson dead but seven years or so ;  
Brook Farm was budding, Garrison had started  
His *Liberator*, Fourier still alive ;  
And Emerson was preening his slim wings  
For flights into broad spaces — there was stir  
Enough to sweep the Shelleyan heads, — in truth  
Shelley was scarcely passed a decade then.  
Old Godwin still was writing, wars for freedom  
Swept through the Grecian Isles, America  
Had "isms" in abundance, but not one  
Took hold of you.

In 1832 Alfred has drawn

## AUTOCHTHON

Out of old Mallory and Grecian myths  
The "Lady of Shalott" and fair "Ænone,"  
And put them into verse.  
This is the year you fight the Black Hawk war,  
And issue an address to Sangamon's people.  
You are but twenty-three, yet this address  
Would not shame Charles or Alfred; it's restrained,  
And sanely balanced, without extra words,  
Or youth's conceits, or imitative figures, dreams  
Or "isms" of the day. No, here you hope  
That enterprise, morality, sobriety  
May be more general, and speak a word  
For popular education, so that all  
May have a "moderate education" as you say.  
You make a plea for railroads and canals,  
And ask the suffrages of the people, saying  
You have known disappointment far too much  
To be chagrined at failure, if you lose.  
They take you at your word and send another  
To represent them in the Legislature.  
Then you decide to learn the blacksmith's trade.  
But Fate comes by and plucks you by the sleeve,  
And changes history, doubtless.

By '36 when Charles returns to England  
You have become a legislator; yes  
You tried again and won. You have become  
A lawyer too, by working through the levels

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Of laborer, store-keeper and surveyor,  
Wrapped up in problems of geometry,  
And Kirkham's grammar and Sir William Blackstone,  
And Coke on Littleton, and Joseph Chitty.  
Brook Farm will soon bloom forth, Francois Fourier  
Is still on earth, and Garrison is shaking  
Terrible lightning at Slavocracy.  
And certain libertarians, *videlicet*  
John Greenleaf Whittier and others, sing  
The trampling out of grapes of wrath; in truth  
The Hebrews taught the idealist how to sing  
Destruction in the name of God and curse  
Where strength was lacking for the sword — but you  
Are not a Robert Emmet, or a Shelley,  
Have no false dreams of dying to bring in  
The day of Liberty. At twenty-three  
You're measuring the world and waiting for  
Dawn's mists to clear that you may measure it,  
And know the field's dimensions ere you put  
Your handle to the plow.

In 1833 a man named Hallam,  
A friend of Alfred's, died at twenty-two.  
Thereafter Alfred worked his hopes and fears  
Upon the dark impasto of this loss  
In delicate colors. And in 1850  
When you were sunk in melancholia,  
As one of no use in the world, adjudged



## AUTOCHTHON

To be of no use by your time and place,  
Alfred brought forth his Dante dream of life,  
Received the laureate wreath and settled down  
With a fair wife amid entrancing richness  
Of sunny seas and silken sails and dreams  
Of Araby,  
And ivied halls, and meadows where the breeze  
Of temperate England blows the hurrying cloud.  
There, seated like an Oriental king  
In silk and linen clothed took the acclaim  
Of England and the world! . . .

This is the year

You sit in a little office there in Springfield,  
Feet on the desk and brood. What are you thinking?  
You're forty-one; around you spears are whacking  
The wind-mills of the day, you watch and weigh.  
The sun-light of your mind quivers about  
The darkness every thinking soul must know,  
And lights up hidden things behind the door,  
And in dark corners. You have fathomed much,  
Weighed life and men. O what a spheréd brain,  
Strong nerved, fresh blooded, firm in plasmic fire,  
And ready for a task, if there be one!  
That is the question that makes brooding thought:  
For you know well men come into the world  
And find no task, and die, and are not known —  
Great spheréd brains gone into dust again,  
Their light under a bushel all their days!

## THE GREAT VALLEY

In 1859, Charles publishes  
His "Origin of Species," and 'tis said  
You see it, or at least hear what it is.  
Out of three travelers in a distant land  
One writes a book of what the three have seen.  
Perhaps you never read much, yet perhaps  
Some books were just a record of your mind.  
How had it helped you in your work to read  
The "Idylls of the King"? As much, perhaps,  
Had Alfred read the Northwest Ordinance  
Of 1787. . . .

But in this year  
Of '59 you're sunk in blackest thought  
About the country maybe, but, I think,  
About this riddle of our mortal life.  
You were a poet, Abraham, from your birth.  
That makes you think, and makes you deal at last  
With things material to the tune of laws  
Moving in higher spaces when you're called  
To act — and show a poet moulding stuff  
Too tough for spirits practical to mould.  
Here are you with your feet upon the desk.  
You have been beaten in a cause which kept  
Some strings too loose to catch the vibrate waves  
Of a great Harp whose music you have sensed.  
You are a mathematician using symbols  
Like Justice, Truth, with keenness to perceive

## AUTOCHTHON

Disturbance of equations, a logician  
Who sees invariable laws, and beauty born  
Of finding out and following the laws.  
You are a Plato brooding there in Springfield.  
You are a poet with a voice for Truth,  
And never to be claimed by visionaries  
Who chant the theme of bread and bread alone.

But here and now

They want you not for Senator, it seems.  
You have been tossed to one side by the rush  
Of world events, left stranded and alone,  
And fitted for no use, it seems, in Springfield.  
A country lawyer with a solid logic,  
And gift of prudent phrase which has a way  
Of hardening under time to rock as hard  
As the enduring thought you seal it with.  
You've reached your fiftieth year, your occultation  
Should pass. If ever, we should see a light :  
In all your life you have not seen a city.  
But now our Springfield giant strides Broadway,  
Thrills William Cullen Bryant, sets a wonder  
Going about the East, that Kirkham's grammar  
Can give a man such speech at Cooper Union,  
Which even Alfred's, trained to Virgil's style,  
Cannot disdain for matching in the thought  
With faultless clearness.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And still in 1860 all the Brahmins  
Have fear to give you power.  
You are a backwoodsman, a country lawyer  
Unlettered in the difficult art of states.  
A denizen of a squalid western town,  
Dowered with a knack of argument alone,  
Which wakes the country school-house, and may lift  
Its devotees to Congress by good fortune.  
But then at Cooper Union intuitive eyes  
Had measured your tall frame, and careful speech,  
Your strength and self-possession. Then they came  
With that dramatic sense which is American  
Into the hall with rails which you had split,  
And called you Honest Abe, and wearing badges  
With your face on them and the poor catch words  
Of Honest Abe, as if you were a referee  
Like Honest Kelly, when in truth no man  
Had ever been your intimate, ever slapped you  
With brisk familiarity, or called you  
Anything but Mr. Lincoln, never  
Abe, or Abraham, and never used  
The Hello Bill of salutation to you —  
O great patrician, therefore fit to be  
Great democrat as well !

In 1862 Charles publishes  
"How Orchid Flowers are Fertilized by Insects,"  
And you give forth a proclamation saying



## AUTOCHTHON

“The Union must have peace, or I wipe out  
The blot of negro slavery. You see,  
The symphony’s the thing, and if you mar it,  
Contending over slavery, I remove  
The source of the disharmony. I admit  
The freedom of the press — but for the Union.  
When you abuse the Union, you shall stop.  
And when you are in jail, no habeas corpus  
Shall bring relief — I have suspended it.”  
To-day they call you libertarian —  
Well, so you were, but just as Beauty is,  
And Truth is, even if they curb and vanquish  
The lower heights of beauty and of truth.  
They take your speech and deeds and give you place  
In Hebrew temples with Ezekiel,  
Habakkuk and Isaiah — you emerge  
From this association, master man !  
You are not of the faith that breeds the ethic  
Wranglers, who make economic goals  
The strain and test of life. You are not one,  
Spite of your lash and sword threat, who believe  
God will avenge the weak. That is the dream  
Which builds millenniums where disharmonies  
That make the larger harmony shall cease —  
A dream not yours. And they shall lose you who  
Enthroned you as a prophet who cut through  
The circle of our human sphere of life  
To let in wrath and judgments, final tests

## THE GREAT VALLEY

On Life around the price of sparrows, weights  
Wherewith bread shall be weighed. . . .

There is a windless flame where cries and tears,  
Where hunger, strife, and war and human blood  
No shadow cast, and where the love of Truth,  
Which is not love of individual souls,  
Finds solace in a Judgment of our life.  
That is the Flame that took both Charles and You —  
O leader in a Commonwealth of Thought!

## VIII

### GRANT AND LOGAN AND OUR TEARS

'Twixt certain parallels of latitude;  
Say thirty-seven and forty-two and more;  
And certain meridians, say ninety-one  
And eighty-seven plus.  
The top line drawn to leave the lower lake  
Shaped like a drinking cup to meet your needs;  
To bind you to the east and west,  
Save you from tributary servitude  
Through Mississippi's River to the south.  
No sheds of hills to guard you on the north  
Against the arctic winds loosed at the pole,  
Or Medicine Hat parturient as the bag  
Of Mad Æolus.

The valley and the river just a hall-way  
Making a draft for tropic heat in summer —  
Well, here you are in physiography.

Upon a time black soil was poured  
Over your surface as the cook  
Pours chocolate on a cake.  
So you are fertile, never a land so rich.

A little river flowing in the lake  
Vanishing in marshes up a mile or so  
Makes for a portage to another stream

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Which empties in another stream which empties  
Into the Mississippi.  
A spot between the lake and river lies  
Upon the highway binding east and west,  
And from the south and north where traders meet.  
This is the very place to build a fort —  
The fort becomes a town within a year,  
A great metropolis in half a cycle.

Within a lifetime you have gained  
Some seven million souls.  
The land of Luther sends a swarming host ;  
And Milton's land adventurous sons ;  
And Scandinavia's realm,  
And Michael Angelo's mountains,  
All Europe pours her wealth  
Of brawn and spirit on you,  
Until you are an empire  
Of restless vital men, and teeming towns.

Before you were grown rich,  
And populous  
You brightened history ;  
Great men came from you.  
But now that you have cities and great treasure  
Where are your great ones ?  
What is your genius ?  
What star enwraps your eyes ?



## GRANT AND LOGAN AND OUR TEARS

What heights allure you ?  
Hermaphroditic giant, sad and drunk  
Not gay, but foolish, stuffed with new baked bread,  
Who took away your gland pituitary,  
Abandoned you to such exaggerate growth  
Without increase of soul ?  
You blasphemous, yet afraid,  
Licentious, yet ashamed,  
Swaggering, yet blubbering  
And boasting of your rights.  
Materialist who woos the spiritual,  
Who holds aloft the cross from which you've sold  
The nails to junk-men.  
And makes a hackle from the crown of thorns  
Wherewith to hackle hemp to make a rope  
For your own hanging in the Philippines !  
Who with one hand grabs off the widow's mite,  
And with the other tosses golden coins  
Into the beggar's cup.  
The black-snake whip in one hand, in the other  
A plentiful supply of surgeon's tape. Oh you !  
A hard oppressor, charitably inclined,  
And keen to see and take the outward image —  
Devoid of categories to reduce  
Its truth and meaning.

No seed of old world thistles should be sown here,  
Or let to fly upon this soil.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Yet dogma has been sown here  
Men rise thereby who sow the seed again ;  
Accessory spirits keep the ground well stirred.  
It's gold and then it's power, but gold at last.  
And for the rest what are your dominant breeds ?  
Smug cultures where the aggregate mind is leather  
Gorged with the oil respectability  
Impervious to thought.  
These pick the eunuch type as being safe,  
American, it's called :  
Sleek, quiet, smiling, ready servitors  
Who for the salary, and that alone,  
(Require no bribes)  
Effect the business will.

You are a hollow thing of steel, a cauldron,  
No monument of freedom.  
You're lettered, it is true,  
With many luminous truths that came to be  
Through deeds of men who died for liberty.  
But inside you there is a seething compost  
Of public schools, the ballot, journalism,  
Laws, jurisprudence, dogma, gold the chief  
Ingredient all stirred into a brew  
Wherewith to feed yourself and keep yourself  
The thing you are !  
Not wholly slave, not really free,  
Desiring vaguely to be master moral,

## GRANT AND LOGAN AND OUR TEARS

And yet too sicklied over by old truths,  
The ballot, fear, plebian spirit, lack of mind,  
To reach patrician levels —  
Hermaphroditic giant, misty-eyed,  
Half blinded by ideals, half by greed !

Can nothing but a war,  
The prospect of a slaughter or the prize  
Of foreign lands, shake off your lethargy,  
And make you seem as big in spirit as  
You are in body ?  
Would you not love the general weal improved ?  
Would you not love your towns made beautiful ?  
Your halls and courts  
Reclaimed from dicers' oaths ?  
Your laws made just and tuned to god-like laws ?  
Your weights and measures made invariable ?  
Is there no tonic in such hopes as these  
To rouse you, giant ?

I think you are Delilah  
Tricked out as Liberty for a fancy ball,  
Spiritless, provincial, shabby, dull,  
Where no ways gentle, no natural mirth prevails.  
You've put your Samson's eye out ; he would see.  
You've chained him to the grinder, he would play,  
Be wise and human, free, courageous, fair,  
Of cleaner flesh and nobler spirit. Look

## THE GREAT VALLEY

He may pull down your bastard temple yet,  
And make you use pentelic marble for  
Rebuilding of the Parthenon you planned,  
And leave the misse stone thrown in a heap  
For sheep gates in the walls of Ancient Zion !



## THE MUNICIPAL PIER

Great snail whose lofty horns are knobbed with gold ;  
Long javelin of red-wood lying straight  
Upon the changing indigos which unfold  
In blues and chrysophrases from the gate  
Of this our city sea-ward, till the gull  
Becomes a gnat where lights annihilate  
The wings' last beat ! Or are you like a hull  
Pompeiiian red upon the Nile's slate green ?  
Or are you like these clouds which fanciful  
Half open eyes make giant fish serene,  
And motionless as rifts of carbuncles  
Sunk in a waste of faience sky, between  
Such terrifying turquoise ? Darkness dulls  
The torches of your towers struck to flame  
By sun-set, and you mass amid the hulls  
Of shadows on the water, then reclaim  
This blackness with a thousand eyes of light !  
Peiræus made with hands, which over-came  
The waters, where no point of land gave might  
To walls and slips, no Peiraic promontory  
Inspired our Hippodamus in his flight  
Sea-ward with docks, parades, an auditory

## THE GREAT VALLEY

For music and a dancing floor for youths,  
But only the sea tempted. Telling the story  
That grows within the loop, its dens and booths,  
And palaces of trade, is to omit  
The city's lofty genius and the truths  
Through which she works at best, against the wit  
Of creatures who would sell her body, take  
The money of the sale as perquisite  
For grossness in luxurious life. Awake  
Themistocles of us and carve the dream  
Of Burnham into stone! Along this lake  
Such as no city looks on, to redeem  
Its shores from shrieks and crashes, refuse, smoke  
His architectural vision sketched the scheme  
Of harbors, islands, boulevards — he spoke  
For these, the concourse, stadium and a tomb  
For that dull infamy of filth whose cloak  
Is law, hiding the greedy hands that doom  
To long delay with bribery. He is gone  
These several years into the narrow room  
Where beauty is no more of walk or lawn,  
Or arch or peristyle, but still he says:  
"Work quickly into form what I have drawn,  
And give Chicago of these middle days  
The glory which it merits: To this Pier  
Make wide the marble way, build new the quays  
Give to the swimmers depths made fresh and clear,  
Lay out the flowering gardens, founts and pools

## THE MUNICIPAL PIER

Such as Versailles knows. The river steer  
Under the arches of two decked bascules.”  
Look at the photographs of seventy-six,  
Whoever you are who mocks or ridicules  
This city, then imagine stones and bricks  
Which from such lowness rose, in fifty years  
By so much grown miraculous to transfix  
The future’s wonder as ours is for piers  
Like this, Chicago! O ye men who wield  
Small strength or great or none, too apt at sneers  
For men who did too little, you must yield  
Your names for judgment soon, have you done more  
To make this city great than Marshall Field?  
While you were railing, idling, on this shore  
Hands silent, out of sight were plunged in toil.  
You woke one morning to the waters’ roar  
And saw these gilded turrets flash and spoil  
The sun-light of the spring. What have you sown  
Of truth or beauty in this eager soil  
To make your living felt, your labor known?  
Sometimes I see silk banners in the sky,  
And hear the sound of silver trumpets blown,  
And bells high turreted. And passing by  
This firmament of rolling blue great throngs  
Stream in an air of brilliant sun where I  
A century gone am of it, when my songs  
Are but a record of a day that died,  
And saw the end of desecrating wrongs.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

How sweet bells are borne on the evening tide  
High up where heaven is flushed and the moon's  
    sphere  
Looks down on temples, arches, where the wide  
Eternal waters thunder round the Pier!



## GOBINEAU TO TREE

Since our talk at Christiana I have read  
All you referred me to concerning Lincoln :  
His speeches and the story of the struggle  
Which ended in your war, not civil really  
But waged between two nations — but no matter !  
To me whose life is closing, and whose life  
Was spent in struggle, much of misery,  
In friendship with De Tocqueville then at odds  
With him and his philosophy, who knew  
Bismarck, who saw the wars of Europe, saw  
Great men come up and fall, and systems change,  
Who probed into the Renaissance and mastered  
Religions and philosophies and wrote  
Concerning racial inequalities —  
To me I say this crisis of your time  
And country seems remote as it might be  
Almost in far Australia, trivial  
In substance and effect, or world result.  
And now your letter and these documents  
Concerning Douglas yield but scanty gold.  
Perhaps I've reached an age where I cannot  
Digest new matter, or resolve its worth,  
Extract its bearing and significance.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

But since you ask me I am writing you  
What I've arrived at.

From the photographs  
And the descriptions of your Illinois,  
Where Lincoln spent his youth, I almost sicken :  
Small muddy rivers flanked by bottom lands  
So fat of fertile stuff the grossest weeds  
Thrive thriftier than in Egypt, round their roots  
Repulsive serpents crawl, the air is full  
Of loathsome insects, and along these banks  
An agued people live who have no life  
Except hard toil, whose pleasures are the dance  
Where violent liquor takes the gun or knife ;  
Who have no inspiration save the orgy  
Of the religious meeting, where the cult  
Of savage dreams is almost theirs. The towns  
Places of filth, of maddening quietude ;  
Streets mired with mud, board sidewalks where the men,  
Like chickens with the cholera, stand and squeak  
Foul or half-idiot things ; near by the churches,  
Mere arch-ways to the grave-yard. Nothing here  
Of conscious plan to lift the spirit up.  
All is defeat of liberty in spite  
Of certain strong men, certain splendid breeds,  
The pioneers who made your state ; no beauty  
Save as a soul delves in a master book.  
And out of this your Lincoln came, not poor

## GOBINEAU TO TREE

As Burns was in a land of storied towers,  
But poor as a degenerate breed is poor  
Sunk down in squalor.

Yet he seems a man  
Of master qualities. The muddy streets,  
And melancholy of a pastoral town,  
And sights of people sick, the stifling weeds  
Which grew about him left his spirit clean,  
Save for an ache that all his youth was spent  
In such surroundings.

And observe the man !  
Do poverty and life among such people  
Make him a libertarian ? Let us see.  
At twenty years he is a centralist,  
Stands for the bank which Andrew Jackson fought,  
And lauds protection, thinks of Washington  
Much more than Springfield. That is right I say —  
But call him not a democrat.

Look here !  
This master book of Stephens which you sent me  
Accuses Lincoln of imperial deeds,  
And breach of laws, and rightly so, in truth.  
That makes me love him, but the end he sought  
Is something else. At first that was the Union,  
Straight through it was the Union, but at last

## THE GREAT VALLEY

The strain of Christian softness always his  
Which filled him full of hate for slavery  
Cropped out in freedom for your negro slaves,  
Which was an act of war, and so confessed,  
Not propped by law, but only by a will.  
Thus he became a man who broke all law  
To have his law. He killed a million men  
For what he called the Union, what he thought  
Was truth of Christian brotherhood. I say  
He killed a million men, for it is true  
Your war had never come, had he believed  
All government must rest in men's consent.  
What have we but a soul imperial?  
A brother to me, standing for the strong,  
For master races, blindly at the work  
Of biologic mount? The cells of him  
That make him saint for radicals and dreamers  
Are but somatic, but the sperm of him  
Will propagate great rulers.

See his face!

Its tragic pathos fools the idealist —  
But study it. First, then, observe the eyes,  
And tell me how within their gaze events  
Or men could lose their true proportions! Here  
No visions swarm, no dreams with flashing wings  
Throw light upon them. No, they only look  
Across a boundless prairie, that is all.



## GOBINEAU TO TREE

And in that brow and nose we see a strength  
Slow, steady, wary, cautious — why this man  
Is your conservative, perhaps your best,  
Which is one reason why he loved the Union,  
And even said at last that government  
Of the people meant the Union — how absurd! —  
Would perish, if it perished, clearly false!  
And if 'twere true would be the better. Read  
My Renaissance, and other books, you'll see  
How I'd protect the master spirits, keep  
The master races pure; how I detest  
The brotherhood of man, how I have shown  
The falseness of these Galilean dreams,  
These syrups strained in secret, used to drug  
The strong and make them equal with the weak.  
Such things are of the mind which weaves in space, —  
A penalty of thought. Come back to earth,  
Live close to nature. Do not sap a rose  
To nourish cabbages, and call it truth!

Well, then, your negro's freed! But what of that?  
You do not want him for a friend or spouse.  
I would not see him whipped, or made a bond.  
But tell me what you're thinking of who say  
His freedom is a gain for liberty?  
To buy men's labor is to buy their bodies.  
Your country now has entered on a course  
Of buying labor, wait and see what comes!

## THE GREAT VALLEY

I see processions filing through your land.  
They carry banners bearing Lincoln's face.  
And there are hordes who think the kingdom's coming :  
As Lincoln freed the slaves, one will arise  
To free all men ! The signs before the war  
Are come again, portentous stars appear  
Which prophesied the war ! All revolutions  
Are so announced, the world is rising higher  
Through ordered revolutions, preordained !  
Well, certain men look at these mad processions  
From well-protected windows, with a smile —  
They are your millionaires, they think they know  
The soul of Lincoln better than the crowds  
That carry banners with his picture on them.  
Yes, all they have they owe to Lincoln, they  
Grew strong through Lincoln.

But are you content  
To have your negroes free, and millionaires  
In mastership of your republic ? Where  
Are men to overlord your millionaires ? You know  
Out of the eater comes forth meat, who will  
Exhaust the strength of those whose strength was gained  
From blood of boys shed on the battle field ?  
What can you do to have a Renaissance  
That with a terrible light will drive to covert  
Owls, bats, and mousing hawks, that neither know  
What life is, whence they come, nor what they are,

## GOBINEAU TO TREE

Who live by superstition, codes of slaves,  
Fear truth, are weak, and only hunger know —  
You must have such a Renaissance or die  
While slipping smugly, self sufficiently  
Along a way unvisioned, while you play  
The hypocrite as it was never played  
In any place, in any time on earth!  
These things I see. But let me in conclusion  
Point to your Lincoln as a man who makes  
For power and beauty in your country, call it  
Republic if you will, the name is nothing.  
I say the vitalest force is love, not hate.  
I say that all great souls are lovers, but of what?  
Why, what great Goethe loved! Your master men  
Should learn of Goethe, hold the crowd through him.  
And Lincoln was a lover, but of what?  
Well not the cesspool of the black man's slavery.  
He loved the mathematics of high truths,  
And heightened spirituality, that's the reason  
Only a man like me can know him, that's  
The reason that your crude American thought  
Misses the man.

## OLD PIERY

I had a paying little refinery  
And all was well with me, and then  
The Trust edged up to me and wiped me out.  
So much for northern tariff, freedom  
Of niggers and New England rule.  
Praise God for sponging slavery from the Slate!  
Well, then I was without a cent again,  
What should I do? I wanted first a change,  
And rest in the use of other faculties,  
So I went out and took a farm.  
One thing leads to another. I wake up one morning  
And find a man from Illinois  
Become my neighbor on the adjoining farm.  
It's your John Cogdall, once of Petersburg,  
County of Menard, in Illinois,  
Precinct Indian Point, he said to me.  
We're friends at once, and visit back and forth.  
Two months ago I saw upon his table  
A copy of the *Petersburg Observer* —  
John likes to hear the home-town news —  
I pick it up and scan it through to see  
What a country paper is in Illinois.



## OLD PIERY

And there I read this notice of "Old Piery,"  
Real name Cordelia Stacke, dead thirty years,  
Whose money in the county treasury  
Is to be made escheat. So here I am  
Maneuvering for this money, rather shabby  
If I was not so devilish poor and pressed ;  
If letting Menard County have the prize  
Would profit any one, when I can prove  
Old Piery was my great aunt,  
Her father and my grandfather brothers,  
When I can prove that I'm her only heir.

Yes, but not as pure of blood.  
Her father was a judge in South Carolina,  
Her mother was a belle of New Orleans,  
My father told me so. Cordelia Stacke,  
"Old Piery," as you called her, was a story  
We heard as children sitting on his knee.  
I know to prove my name is Stacke,  
And then because her name was Stacke  
Won't draw this money from your treasury,  
But wait  
Go to your vault and get that ring she wore,  
Slipped from her dead hand when you found her body  
Dead for a week amid her rags and stuff.  
Go get that ring, Mr. Treasurer of Menard,  
If I don't describe it  
Down to the finest point,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Just as I heard my father say  
The night she disappeared she wore a ring  
Of such and such, I'll go back to my farm  
In Mississippi. But I'll do much more  
I'll trace her from Columbia to Old Salem;  
I'll show her crazed brain luring her along  
To find the spot where Lincoln kept the store  
Two miles from where we sit.  
She must have walked  
Across Virginia, West Virginia,  
Ohio, Indiana, or perhaps  
She footed it through Tennessee, Kentucky.

I talked this morning with your county judge.  
He said she came here late in '65  
Or early '66,  
Was seen by farmers near the Salem Mill,  
A loitering, mumbling woman,  
Not old, but looking old, and aging fast  
As she became a figure in your streets  
And alleys with a gunny-sack on back,  
Wherein she stuffed old bottles, paper, things  
She picked industriously and stored away.  
Would buy a bit of cold food at the baker's.  
Sometimes would sit on door steps eating cake,  
Which friendly hands had given her, then depart  
And say, "God rest your souls!" Attended mass  
On Sunday mornings, knew no one

## OLD PIERY

And had no friends.  
In '69 was found incompetent,  
And placed in charge of a conservator.  
Then as she was not dangerous went ahead  
At picking rags,  
Until in '97 passed away.

Such was the life and death of a fine girl,  
The daughter of a judge in South Carolina  
And a belle of New Orleans.  
And after life at best knew life at worst,  
Beginning in a southern capitol  
Where she knew riches, admiration, place,  
She ended up in Petersburg, Illinois,  
A little croaking, mad but harmless waif,  
A withered leaf stirred by the Lincoln storm.  
And here's my guess :  
The fancy of her madness brought her here  
To see the country where  
The man who was a laborer, kept a store,  
Could rise therefrom,  
And bring such desolation to the South,  
Such sorrow to herself, that is my guess.

The name's Cordelia Stacke inside this ring  
You tell me. She's the same no doubt.  
We all lived in Columbia when the troops  
Of Sherman whirled upon us to the sea.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

I was a year old then. We were burned out,  
Lost everything.  
The troops came howling, plundering,  
And tossing combustible chemicals.  
They butchered just for sport our cattle;  
Split chests and cabinets with savage axes;  
Walked with their hob-nailed boots on our pianos;  
Ran bayonets through pictures;  
Rode horses in our parlors;  
Broke open trunks and safes;  
Searched cellars, opened graves for hoarded gold,  
And yelled "You dirty rebels now we've got you."  
They filled their bellies up with wine and whisky,  
And drunken, howling through Columbia's streets  
They carried vases, goblets, silver, gold,  
And rolled about with pockets full of loot,  
And then at last they stuck the torch to us  
And made a bon-fire of our city.

Cordelia had a lover who was killed  
At Antietam fighting, not for niggers,  
But fighting back the fools who had been crazed  
By preachers, poets, Garrisons and Whittiers  
Who thought they worked for freedom, but instead  
Worked for New England's tariff — look at me  
How could the trust destroy me if the tariff  
Put no bricks in the bully's boxing gloves?  
Well, then, Cordelia lost her lover,

## OLD PIERY

And when the troops came was a novitiate  
Nun at the convent. And the soldiers came  
To say the convent would be spared. But when  
The flames arose, she ran into the city  
To be beside her father and her mother.  
And she arrived  
Just as the soldiers entered the house for loot.  
Her mother was in bed half dead from fright,  
Not well at best.  
The soldiers broke the bedroom door,  
And howled for treasure. When the mother said  
There was no treasure, then they took her  
And flung her from the bed, ripped up the mattress,  
Raked pictures from the walls, and smashed the mirrors,  
Tore closets open, then went to the cellar  
Leaving the mother lying on the floor,  
Who lay as dead.  
They drank what wine they found,  
Then seized the father, hung him to a tree  
To make him tell where he kept money hidden.  
The mother died in two days from the fright.  
The father was not killed, they took him down,  
And went their way carousing, yelling out  
"You dirty rebels now we've got you fair."  
Cordelia thought no doubt that both were dead.  
A passerby beheld her on the lawn  
Her hair let down and plucking at her dress.  
But who could stop to help her in that hell



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Of a city burning and the howls and shouts,  
And falling walls?

Cordelia disappeared and from that night  
Was never seen or heard of. To his death  
Her father thought she met a terrible fate:  
Was raped and slaughtered.

So you see

All of this put together tells the story  
Of this poor creature whom you called "Old Piery."  
But let me add Cordelia had a horse  
She called "Old Piery" — that fits in my proof.  
That's why she named herself "Old Piery" here,  
And gave your boys and girls a mocking name  
To hail her with as she went up your alleys;  
With which to rap the windows of her room,  
Where bottles, cans, waste rags, and copper things,  
Old hoops of iron, staves, old boots and shoes,  
Springs, wheels of clocks, and locks of broken guns,  
Old boards and boxes, stacks of paper waste  
Stuffed up the place, and where unknown to all  
Paper and silver money hid in cracks  
Between the leaves of fouled and rain-soaked books,  
Or packed in jars were kept by her. You see  
Her mind was turned to treasure, hiding it  
Against the soldiers maybe, in this land  
Where Lincoln was a laborer, farmer, kept  
A store at Salem.

## OLD PIERY

Well I say

God rest her soul, as she was used to say.  
I want to raise a stone to mark her grave,  
And carve her name below a broken heart.  
For listen now: the ring Cordelia wore  
Was just a little band of gold and set  
With a cornelian heart — am I not right?  
I knew I was.

## THE TYPICAL AMERICAN ?

He calls himself an American citizen —  
And yet among such various breeds of men  
Who'll call him typical ? At any rate  
His faults or virtues one may predicate  
Somewhat as follows : He is sent to school  
Little or much, where he imbibes the rule  
Of safety first and comfort ; in his youth  
He joins the church and ends the quest of truth.  
Beyond the pages of theology  
He does not turn, he does not seem to see  
How hunger makes these Occidental creeds  
Sweet foliage on which the stomach feeds.  
Like those thick tussock moths upon the bole  
Of a great beech tree, feed the human soul  
And it will use the food for gold and power !  
So men have used Christ Jesus' tender flower,  
And garnered it for porridge, opiates,  
And made it flesh of customs laws and states  
Where life repeats itself after a plan  
And breeds the typical American —  
As he regards himself.

Our man matures  
And enters business, following the lures

## THE TYPICAL AMERICAN ?

Of great increase in business, more receipts —  
Upon this object center all his wits.  
And greater crops make needful larger barns,  
Vainly the parable of Jesus warns.  
His soul is now required, is taken away  
From living waters, in a little day  
Thrift, labor dooms him, leaves him banqueting  
Where nothing nourishes, they are the sting  
Which deadens him and casts him down at last  
Fly blown or numb or lifeless in this vast  
Surrounding air of Vital Power, where God  
Like the great sun, invites the wayside clod  
To live at full.

In time our hero weds  
A woman like himself, and little heads  
Soon run about a house or pleasant yard.  
He must work now to keep them — have regard  
To the community, its thoughts and ways.  
What church is here? He finds it best to praise  
Its pastor and its flock, his children send  
To Sunday school, if never he attend  
Its services. What politics obtain?  
He must support the tussock leaf campaigns  
If he would eat himself. 'Tis best to join  
The party which controls the greater coin.  
And so what is his party's interest  
In business? There must his soul invest

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Its treasure till the two are wholly one.  
Like the poor prostitute he is undone  
In virtue not alone, but he has made  
Himself a cog-wheel in the filthy trade  
Of justice courts, police and graft in wine  
Bondsmen and lawyers with a strength malign  
Moving the silken vested marionette  
To laugh, entice and play the sad coquette.  
Yet if for bread you are compelled to ask  
The giver may impose an evil task,  
Or terms of life. Would you retain a roof,  
Mix with the crowd, nor dare to stand aloof.  
Our hero sees this, wears a hopeful smile  
To cover up his spattered soul, and while  
Digesting wounded truth, hiding his thought,  
His own opinions, for his soul is caught  
Amid the idiot hands that strike and press —  
One may glide through who learns to say yes, yes,  
While in heart-sickness whispering to himself:  
I do this for the children, and for pelf  
To keep the house and yard, the cupboard full.  
Some time I hope to free myself and pull  
My legs out of this social muck and mire.  
First money is, then freedom his desire,  
But often neither comes. If he win wealth  
He has become lead-poisoned, for by stealth  
The virus of the colors which he used  
To paint his life is spread and interfused



## THE TYPICAL AMERICAN ?

In every vein. By ways complaisant  
Our hero has got gold from ignorant  
Vulgarian nondescripts, has entertained  
The odorous cormorants, and has profaned  
His household gods to keep them safe and whole  
Upon the altar — winning what a goal !  
For meantime in this living he has schooled  
His children in the precepts which have ruled  
His days from the beginning. They are bred  
His out-look to repeat, and even to tread  
The way he went amid the tangled wood  
In their own time and chosen neighborhood.  
What has our hero done ? Why nothing more  
Than feed upon the beech leaves, gather store  
For children moths to feed on, and get strength  
To climb the branches and on leaves at length  
To feed of their own will.

Is this a man ?

Is this your typical American ?

## COME, REPUBLIC

Come! United States of America,  
And you one hundred million souls, O Republic,  
Throw out your chests, lift up your heads,  
And walk with a soldier's stride.  
Quit burning up for money alone.  
Quit slouching and dawdling,  
And dreaming and moralising.  
Quit idling about the streets, like the boy  
In the village, who pines for the city.  
Root out the sinister secret societies,  
And the clans that stick together for office,  
And the good men who care nothing for liberty,  
But would run you, O Republic, as a household is run.  
It is time, Republic, to get some class,  
It is time to harden your muscles,  
And to clear your eyes in the cold water of Reality,  
And to tighten your nerves.  
It is time to think what Nature means,  
And to consult Nature,  
When your soul, as you call it, calls to you  
To follow principle!  
It is time to snuff out the A. D. Bloods.

## COME, REPUBLIC

It is time to lift yourself, O Republic,  
From the street corners of Spoon River.

Do you wish to survive,  
And to count in the years to come?  
Then do what the plow-boys did in sixty-one,  
Who left the fields for the camp,  
And tightened their nerves and hardened their arms  
Till the day they left the camp for the fields  
The bravest, readiest, clearest-eyed  
Straight-walking men in the world,  
And symbolical of a Republic  
That is worthy the name!

If you, Republic, had kept the faith  
Of a culture all your own,  
And a spiritual independence,  
And a freedom large and new.  
If you had not set up a Federal judge in China,  
And scrambled for place in the Orient,  
And stolen the Philippine Islands,  
And mixed in the business of Europe,  
Three thousand miles of water east,  
And seven thousand west  
Had kept your hands untainted, free  
For a culture all your own!  
But while you were fumbling, and while you were  
dreaming

## THE GREAT VALLEY

As the boy in the village dreams of the city  
You were doing something worse :  
You were imitating !  
You came to the city and aped the swells,  
And tried to enter their set !  
You strained your Fate to their fate,  
And borrowed the mood to live their life !  
And here you are in the game, Republic,  
But not prepared to play !

But you did it.  
And the water east and water west  
Are no longer your safeguard :  
They are now your danger and difficulty !  
And you must live the life you started to imitate  
In spite of these perilous waters.  
For they keep you now from being neutral —  
For you are not neutral, Republic,  
You only pretend to be.  
You are not free, independent, brave,  
You are shackled, cowardly  
For what could happen to you overnight  
In the Orient,  
If you stood with your shoulders up,  
And were Neutral !

Suppose you do it, Republic.  
Get some class,

## COME, REPUBLIC

Throw out your chest, lift up your head,  
Be a ruler in the world,  
And not a hermit in regimentals with a flint-lock.  
Colossus with one foot in Europe,  
And one in China,  
Quit looking between your legs for the re-appearance  
Of the star of Bethlehem —  
Stand up and be a man!



## PAST AND PRESENT

Past midnight! Vastly overhead  
A wash of stars — the town's asleep!  
And through the pine trees of the dead  
The rising winds of morning creep.

Dim, mid the hillside's shadow grass  
I count the marble slabs. How vain  
My throbbing life that waits to pass  
Into the great world on the train!

The city's vision fades from mind.  
I only see the hill and sky;  
And on the mist that rides the wind  
A tottering pageant meets my eye.

The cock crows faintly, far away;  
A troop of age and grief appears.  
Ye shadows of a distant day.  
What do ye, pioneers?

There shines the engine's comet light.  
Ye shadows of a century set,  
Haste to the hillside and the night —  
I am not of you yet!

## ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

To the lovers of Liberty everywhere,  
But chiefly to the youth of America  
Who did not know Robert G. Ingersoll,  
Remember that he helped to make you free!  
He was a leader in a war of guns for freedom,  
But a general in the war of ideas for freedom!  
He braved the misunderstanding of friends,  
He faced the enmity of the powerful small of soul,  
And the insidious power of the churches;  
He put aside worldly honours,  
And the sovereignty of place,  
He stripped off the armor of institutional friendships  
To dedicate his soul  
To the terrible deities of Truth and Beauty!  
And he went down into age and into the shadow  
With love of men for a staff,  
And the light of his soul for a light —  
And with these alone!  
O you martyrs trading martyrdom for heaven,  
And self-denial for eternal riches,  
How does your work and your death compare  
With a man's for whom the weal of the race,  
And the cause of humanity here and now were enough  
To give life meaning and death as well? —  
I have not seen such faith in Israel!

## AT HAVANA

I met a fisherman at Havana once,  
Havana on the Illinois, I mean,  
There by the house and fish boats. He was burned  
The color of an acorn, and his hair  
Was coarse as a horse's tail. His scraggy hands  
Looked like thick bands of weather-colored copper,  
But his eyes were blue as faded gingham is.  
I stood amid the smell of scales and heads,  
And fishes' entrails dumped along the sand.  
The still air was a burning glass which focused  
A bon-fire sun right through my leghorn hat;  
And a black fly from crannies of the air  
Lit on my hand and bit it venomously.  
Across the yellow river lay the bottoms  
Where giant sycamores and elms o'ertopped  
A jungle of disgusting weeds. The breeze  
Hot as a tropic breath exhaled the reek  
Of baking mud and of those noisome weeds,  
Wherewith the odors of putrescent fish  
Mixed on the simmering sands. A naturalist  
Must seek the habitat of the life he studies. . . .  
There on a platform lay the dressed fish, carp,  
Black-bass, and pike and pickerel, buffalo,

## AT HAVANA

Cat-fish, which I had come to see, and talk  
With fishermen along the Illinois.  
My man held up a fish and said to me ;  
“Here is the bastard who drives all the fish  
Out of the river, out of any water  
He comes in, and he comes wherever food  
Can be obtained ; the black-bass, even cat-fish,  
And all the good stocks run away from him,  
He is so hoggish, plaguy, and so mean.  
The other fish may try to live with him,  
I’m thinking sometimes, anyway I know  
He drives the others out.” I looked to see  
What fish is so unfriendly to his fellows.  
“Just look at him,” he said, but as he spoke  
The black fly stung my hand again. When I  
Looked up from swatting him, the man had thrown  
The fish upon the sand, and a stray dog  
Was running off with him along the river.

## THE MOURNER'S BENCH

They're holding a revival at New Hope Meeting house,  
I can't keep from going, I ought to stay away.  
For I come home and toss in bed till day,  
For thinking of my sin, and the trouble I am in.  
I dream I hear the dancers  
In the steps and swings,  
The quadrilles and the lancers  
They danced at Revis Springs.  
I lie and think of Charley, Charley, Charley  
The Bobtown dandy  
Who had his way with me.  
And no one is so handy  
A dancer as Charley  
To Little Drops of Brandy,  
Or the Wind that Shakes the Barley,  
Or Good mornin' Uncle Johnny I've fetched your  
Wagon Home.

And Greenberry Atterberry, who toed it like a pigeon  
Has gone and got religion;  
He's deserted the dancers, the fiddlers, merry-makers,  
And I should do it too.  
For Charley, Charley has left me for to roam.



## THE MOURNER'S BENCH

But a woman at the mourner's bench must tell her story  
true —

What shall I do? What shall I do?

My grandmother told me of Old Peter Cartwright  
Who preached hell-fire  
And the worm that never dies.  
And here's a young preacher at the New Hope Meeting  
house,  
And every one allows, he has old Peter's brows,  
And flaming of the eyes,  
And the very same way, they say.  
Last night he stuck his finger right down in my direc-  
tion,  
And said: "God doesn't care  
For your woman's hair.  
Jesus wants to know if your soul is fair  
As your woman's complexion."  
And then I thought he knew —  
O what shall I do?

Greenberry Atterberry, weeping and unsteady  
Had left his seat already.  
He stood at the mourner's bench in great tribulation  
And told the congregation:  
That fiddling and dancing and tobacco chewin'  
Led up to whisky and to woman's ruin —  
And I thought he looked at me.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Well, you can stop dancing, and you can stop drinking  
And you can leave the quarter-horses at the crooked  
races.

But a woman, a woman, the people will be thinking  
Forever of a woman who confesses her behavior.  
And then I couldn't look in the people's faces,  
All weeping and singing, O gentle Saviour!  
Then the devil said: You wench  
You'd cut a pretty figure at the mourner's bench,  
Go out and look for Charley,  
Go out and look for Charley,  
He's down at Leese's Grove.  
He has found a fresh love  
Go win him back again.  
He is dancing on the platform to the Speckled Hen.

O Saviour, Saviour, how can I join the mourners,  
Face all the scorners?  
But how can I hunt Charley at Leese's Grove?  
How can I stand the staring, the whispering of things  
Down at Revis Springs?  
How can I stand the mocking of the fiddle strings?  
Charley! Charley!  
So it's knowing what's best to do,  
Saviour! Saviour!  
Its knowing what's best to do!

## THE BAY-WINDOW

She sat at a bay-window where she saw  
First open carriages and buggies pass!  
And then Victorias with horses docked  
And bits and buckles, chains of shining brass.  
And then the horseless carriage, till at last  
The swallow-gleam of varnished limousines  
Silent as shadows took her lifted eye,  
Uplifted from a book. She always sat  
In her bay-window with a book,  
And with a tinted fan in summer-time.

But first she was a bride  
Before the war.  
Springing from honest blood, her place  
Passed over lightly as her grandeur grew:  
She was of seed too vital to decay  
Wholly in any soil, the sort that grows and blooms  
Where never gardener comes.  
And this bay-window! An aging man of gold  
Had plucked her up, and here she rests and breathes  
The free air of Chicago's reclamation.  
And then she is  
A wonder-bride for her brown hair,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And gray-blue eyes, and laughter, sunny wit,  
And naturally patrician ways and speech,  
(Acquiring French now that the chance has come),  
And she is eighteen and is born to rule.

And her great merchant husband with blue eyes,  
And strong beaked English nose,  
Walks straighter for a pride that she is his.  
Gives her a country place spaced out in walks,  
And flower beds, where now such flimsy flats  
Confront Grand Boulevard!  
And for a city house he builds a house  
Three stories high at Twentieth street,  
Where then the manifest was sand and oaks,  
And what is now the Loop, was just as far  
As Hyde Park from the Loop is now.

In this bay-window then she sits a bride,  
And sees the scrub oak cut and mansions fill  
Gradually year by year the waste of sand.  
For fashion follows her and builds beside her,  
Till Prairie Avenue becomes the street  
Of millionaires, who hear from traveled wives  
What London is, what Paris is,  
And open purses to unfolding tastes  
For canvases and sculpture.  
For every one grows rich now in Chicago.  
And in the seventies women go to Paris,

## THE BAY-WINDOW

Herself among the first, at least the chief,  
See Egypt and see Rome.  
And when returned drive down where wondering eyes  
Along the marble terrace promenading,  
Where Michigan Avenue was bounded by  
The Lake across the street,  
Behold the striped silk of their parasols  
Fluttering over plumes and dancing eyes,  
And purple velvet of Victorias.

For now it is the classic age!  
There is the driving park,  
There is the Palmer House,  
There are cathedrals too.  
There are the lofty ceilings walnut trimmed,  
And foliate chandeliers of polished-brass,  
And marble-slabbed buffets with heavy cupids,  
And clustered fruits carved in their sombre wood,  
And square pianos with their rosewood legs  
Swelled out with oval figures like great plums.  
And paintings deeply daubed in brown asphaltum  
Where chiaroscuro ends were lost in shadows,  
Not lost in light, depressionistic things,  
From which her lambent intuition led her.  
She was among the first to catch the psychic  
Waves that sweep around this little world  
And change all things.  
She traveled much and lived in Europe much,



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Returning to her window where she watched  
The city pass and bow its admiration,  
The half of whom she knew as time went on,  
Though all knew her and said "there is the queen,"  
Or "there she is who thinks she is the queen."

And when the opera came she was the queen,  
At least a queen whose sovereignty withstood  
Encroaching claims to ripen into rights.  
But then if all were lost where not a million  
People lived as yet, and where, oh well  
Packers and others threw their heavier gold  
In what was once a scale of primogeniture,  
Rome stood and London stood and Paris.  
Have your own way at home, the mood began,  
I am off here where you can scarcely come.  
The next place is the best, a far off place  
Has teasing witcheries to those at home.  
Her husband now was dead some years, the children  
Grown up, or off to school, a daughter married  
To an Italian count kept state in Florence  
Where Browning came, with whom our queen would  
fence

In spiritual dialectics. In her travels  
She had known Ibsen, Patti and George Eliot,  
Sat as a dinner guest by Beaconsfield,  
And taken tea upon Hawarden's lawn.  
And so in escritaires and cabinets

## THE BAY-WINDOW

She kept mementoes of her days abroad :  
Like letters from George Eliot,  
"Ferishtah's Fancies" inscribed by Robert.  
And in the course of time this three-floored house  
Was filled with treasures, tapestries,  
Etruscan things, and faience peacock blue,  
And oriental jade with letters of gold.  
And there she reigned, but lived alone  
The house kept by French maids  
And impeccable butlers.  
And so the years went, and she saw at last  
The city start to slip away from her  
And make her royal isolation  
An ignorant solitude !

Yet she was beautiful at forty years,  
Some years a widow then and very rich.  
She was most fresh and matronly at fifty.  
At fifty-five and sixty she could charm  
A man of any age. And master-men  
Paid suit to her and gained  
The stimulating richness of her mind.  
Some said they did not want her, others said  
Her wisdom and self-mastery froze their hearts.  
But when she spoke she said she could not change  
The name she loved, or change her place in life  
To forced forgetfulness of that English face,  
Who lifted up her life from some obscurity

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And made it flower.  
At any rate she lived for forty years  
With only maids and butlers in a house  
Round which the warring city crept,  
Until at last the street with lowered pulse  
Saw vacant mansions, as the mob psychology,  
Which sways in fashion, brought an exodus.  
But she knew no temptation to depart.  
This was her house, her center of the world.  
And when the Countess left the Count she came  
To ease her mother's loneliness — oh yes!  
Six months of loneliness was quite enough.  
And then in spite of everything she left,  
Returned to Florence and her rascal count,  
Because she could not stand the loneliness,  
And saw ahead long years of loneliness  
In some bay window — no, it could not be!  
And so she left her mother sitting there  
Now sixty-eight or so,  
Who watched the city pass,  
All now the swallow-gleam of limousines,  
And all around her now the boarding house,  
Or institutes for drunkards, hideous blocks  
Of offices and warehouses.

And all her neighbors lying up in Rose Hill.  
Perhaps a few remaining who remembered  
All that she was, could only say to those

## THE BAY-WINDOW

Who had heard of her as she was in the eighties,  
And in the nineties :

“She was a great woman, I can scarce explain.  
It was this way : Chicago then was young.  
Chicago in ten years is changed all through.  
You see it was this way : But then you see  
This great two million thing has slipped away  
From all our hands.”

And then perhaps

A limousine would pass with reckless pridelings  
Coming from tea or dancing at the Blackstone,  
And find their laughter shortened by her face  
At this bay-window

Would say : “Who’s that old woman at the window ?  
She always has a book, or has a fan.”

## MAN OF OUR STREET

This Man's life had four stages as I hear.  
The first stage took him through the days of school  
And fastened on his name a prophecy  
That he would win success. The second stage  
Took him to thirty years while he was fumbling  
The strings to find the key and play in key.  
The third stage marked discouragement, departure  
To speculations and to reconciliation  
That he was born no lawyer. And the fourth  
Was one of quietude and trivial days.  
I knew him in this fourth stage as a man  
Emerging from a house across the street  
On Sunday mornings in silk hat, long coat  
And bamboo cane. When summer came he donned  
A flannel suit of gray, a panama  
And gloves of tan. When winter came he wore  
A double-breasted coat with lamb's fur collar.  
He had no friends, so far as one could see,  
No membership in clubs, was never seen  
Where men meet, or society is gathered.  
Sometimes he stopped to tell a passer-by  
The day is fine, it's very fine, you're right,  
In voice complaisant. The neighbors knew



## MAN OF OUR STREET

He lived upon a little purse he made  
In compromise of some preposterous wrong.  
And people wondered how the purse was lasting,  
And wondered how much longer he could loaf,  
How many seasons more he could appear  
So seasonably attired and walk the streets  
In such velleity, with such vacuous light  
Grown steady in his eyes.

I love to watch  
The chickens in a barn-yard. Nothing else  
Is quite so near the human brood. You'll see  
Invariably a rooster stalk about  
In aimless fashion, moving here and there,  
Picking at times with dull inappetence  
At grains or grit, or standing for a time  
In listless revery. I never saw  
A man with such resemblance to this rooster  
As this man was.

At last we had not seen  
Our man upon the street for several days.  
And some one said he had been very ill.  
His wife had fears and wept and said 'twas hard  
Just on the eve of great success to die.  
He had thought out a plan, she said, to win  
Great trade in South America for us.  
Our State Department thought it excellent.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And then one day four doctors passed his door  
For consultation, and the word went round  
Our man rebelled most piteously and said  
He could not die until he had worked out  
His dream of South America. He knew  
His danger, had the doctors called to check  
The inroads of the peril, though the purse  
Was growing slim, as we discovered later.

One noon-time as I came along the street  
Where twenty children laughed and followed me,  
Half playing at their game, half following  
My banterings and idle talk, and asking  
About the bundle underneath my arm.  
"It's nothing but a chicken, go away,"  
I said to them.

And there across the street  
Was crape upon the door — our man was dead,  
And I was carrying chicken home to boil.

## ACHILLES DEATHERIDGE

"Your name is Achilles Deatheridge?  
How old are you, my boy?"

"I'm sixteen past and I went to the war  
From Athens, Illinois."

"Achilles Deatheridge, you have done  
A deed of dreadful note."

"It comes of his wearing a battered hat,  
And a rusty, wrinkled coat."

"Why didn't you know how plain he is?  
And didn't you ever hear,  
He goes through the lines by day or night  
Like a sooty cannoneer?"

"You must have been half dead for sleep,  
For the dawn was growing bright."

"Well, Captain, I had stood right there  
Since six o'clock last night."

"I cocked my gun at the swish of the grass  
And how am I at fault  
When a dangerous looking man won't stop  
When a sentry hollers halt?"

## THE GREAT VALLEY

"I cried out halt and he only smiled  
And waved his hand like that.  
Why, any Johnnie could wear the coat  
And any fellow the hat."

"I hollered halt again and he stopped  
And lighted a fresh cigar.  
I never noticed his shoulder badge,  
And I never noticed a star."

"So you arrested him? Well, Achilles,  
When you hear the swish of the grass  
If it's General Grant inspecting the lines  
Hereafter let him pass."

## SLIP SHOE LOVEY

You're the cook's understudy  
A gentle idiot body.  
You are slender like a broom  
Weaving up and down the room,  
With your dirt hair in a twist  
And your left eye in a mist.  
Never thinkin', never hopin'  
With your wet mouth open.  
So bewildered and so busy  
As you scrape the dirty kettles,  
O Slip Shoe Lizzie  
As you rattle with the pans.  
There's a clatter of old metals,  
O Slip Shoe Lovey,  
As you clean the milk cans.  
You're a greasy little dovey,  
A laughing scullery daughter,  
As you slop the dish water,  
So abstracted and so dizzy,  
O Slip Shoe Lizzie!

So mussy, little hussie,  
With the china that you break,



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And the kitchen in a smear  
When the bread is yet to bake,  
And the market things are here —  
O Slip Shoe Lovey !

You are hurrying and scurrying  
From the sink to the oven,  
So forgetful and so sloven.  
You are bustling and hustling  
From the pantry to the door,  
With your shoe strings on the floor,  
And your apron strings a-draggin',  
And your spattered skirt a-saggin'.

You're an angel idiot lovey,  
One forgives you all this clatter  
Washing dishes, beating batter.  
But there is another matter  
As you dream above the sink :  
You're in love pitter-patter,  
With the butcher-boy I think.  
And he'll get you, he has got you  
If he hasn't got you yet.

For he means to make you his,  
O Slip Shoe Liz.  
And your open mouth is wet  
To a little boyish chatter.

## SLIP SHOE LOVEY

You're an easy thing to flatter  
With your hank of hair a-twist,  
And your left eye in a mist —  
O Slip Shoe Lovey !

So hurried and so flurried  
And just a little worried  
You lean about the room,  
Like a mop, like a broom.  
O Slip Shoe Lovey !  
O Slip Shoe Lovey !

## THE ARCHANGELS

Flopped on the floor  
With such a silken richness of dark hair,  
Descending breezily like blown water from her brow,  
And from the arched crown of her Raphael head,  
Between the years of twenty-five and thirty,  
Her face glows and is white,  
Like the thin spirit of a candle light.  
And over her forehead passes  
Swift waves of splendor, which must be her thought,  
Looking, it seems, as if a snowy curtain  
Were rhythmically blown at dawn in a white room !

In each of her eyes there is a blue-bright spark !  
One time I saw two stars  
Held in an inch of water when the evening  
Was pale from dying day.  
And under this thin water lay dead leaves  
The drift of late October —  
Gray leaves beneath clear water by an edge  
Where spring's first flower, the azure pickerel weed,  
Bent over contemplated those two stars :  
These were the sparks in her unruffled eyes.

## THE ARCHANGELS

Flopped on the floor  
With little hands clasped round her girlish knees  
Such musical thought sings through her cherub lips —  
Raptures for Beauty,  
Raptures for Truth,  
Raptures for Freedom and a world that is free.  
While around her flames the fire of a durable hope.  
Till at last I sit in wonder  
At the miracle of such spirit,  
And the miracle of the youths about her,  
Listening with bright eyes, in the fellowship of delight,  
Who prompt, suggest, applaud, are passionate  
For the right word, the soaring thought to beat  
At heaven's gate in a last burst of song.  
And here am I a part of this psychic circle,  
Bound with soft loops of gold in a charmed band  
Of a brood of youthful archangels fiery and strong. . . .

Then thrilled with love of a land that can grow such  
souls

I turn and ask them questions:  
How old are you, who were your father and mother?  
What chance have you had in life?  
What books have you read?  
And where have you bred these dreams?  
But why do you laugh? for there must be soil or blood  
Or both, for there must be the souls of free men  
And the loins of free men,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

To make archangels you know,  
And pour them into the city to think and plan  
For a greater Republic to come.  
And though it matters nothing that villages  
In Iowa, Indiana, Illinois  
In the great far west, in New England, gave us you,  
Or you, or you, or you —  
I somehow thrill at the contrast, or thrill with the  
    thought  
Of such great richness and vastness in the land,  
Flowering such souls all fresh and keen,  
And eager to make the Republic wholly free —  
May she deserve your love!



## SONG OF CHANGE

Deep thought that comes through stainless skies ;  
Pure moods that arch the fancy's birth ;  
Sweet sorrow, clear in youthful eyes ;  
Soft laughter, speaking maiden mirth ; —  
Such gifts were thine, ere time o'ercast  
The sunshine of thy tender heart ;  
And now that joy itself is past  
Yet patience still will do its part.

Sad stars from which the sun has drawn  
The light of life, no longer bright ;  
Life of our lives, that with the dawn  
Passed, though remembered, from our sight !  
From noonday stept the chilling shade  
That struck the quivering aspens still ;  
Thou hopeful one, thou unafraid,  
Smiled — but the Shadow had his will.

Souls of our youth which tire and sleep  
And wake to find the hour is sped !  
Thou scorn which mocks us if we weep !  
Thou hope which says "Be comforted !"  
Thou vision dulled, whose tutored eye  
Sees but in vain the poplar tree  
As once upblown against the sky,  
When we were fain, when we were free.

## MEMORABILIA

Old pioneers, how fare your souls to-day?  
They seem to be  
Imminent about this pastoral way,  
This sunny lea.  
The elms and oaks you knew, greenly renew  
Their leaves each spring,  
But never comes the hour again which drew  
Your world from view.

Here in a mood I lay, deep in the grass,  
Between the graves;  
And saw ye rise, ye shadowy forms, and pass  
O'er the wind's waves;  
Sunk eyes and bended head, wherefrom is fled  
The light of life;  
Even as the land, whose early youth is dead,  
Whose glory fled.

With eighty years gone over what remains  
For tongue to tell?  
Hence was it that in silence, with no pains  
At last 'twas well,  
Under these trees to creep, for ultimate sleep  
To soothe regret,

## MEMORABILIA

For the world's ways, for war, let mankind reap,  
You said, and weep.

Abram Rutledge died, ere the great war  
Ruined the land.  
His well-loved son was struck on fields afar  
By a brother's hand.  
Then brought they him, O pioneer, on his bier  
To the hill and the tree,  
Back home and laid him, son of Trenton, here  
Your own grave near.

Of all unuttered griefs, of vaguest woes,  
None equals this :  
Forgotten hands, and work that no one knows  
Whose work it is ;  
Good gifts bequeathed, but never earned, or spurned  
In hate or pride ;  
And the boon of an age destroyed, ere a cycle turned  
O'er you inurned.

Abram Rutledge lies in a sunken grave,  
Dust and no more,  
Let Freedom fail, it is naught to him, who was brave,  
Who stood to the fore.  
The oaks and elms he knew, greenly renew  
Their leaves each spring,  
But gone his dream with that last hour which drew  
His world from view.

## TO A SPIROCHAETA

If through the microscope  
We peer and stare  
You look like marceled shreds of rope,  
Or maiden hair,  
With eyeless hunger swift to grope  
Out of your lair.

To feed and to fulfill your fate  
You dive and swim  
Forward and backward flagellate  
Amid the dim  
Ichor of women where you mate,  
Delicate, slim.

Why are you screw-shaped, in a spiral?  
And why your form  
Like a crooked hand upon a dial?  
You are the norm  
For all hell sealed up in a vial  
To break in storm.

Your whips are sharper far than sickles,  
Or cricket bristle;

## TO A SPIROCHAETA

With finer points than rose-leaf prickles,  
Or drifting thistle;  
You feed yourself till the blood trickles  
Through flesh and gristle.

When a man knows he is your diet  
A solemn thrill  
Shows in great eyes and spirit quiet  
For fears that kill;  
He is a maelstrom running riot,  
At the center still.

Well, Robert Burns: You saw a louse  
On a lady crawling.  
But one can keep to his own house  
Without forestalling  
This demon on his death carouse  
Breeding and sprawling.

But, Robert Burns, this does not tent  
Our pride or tease us;  
It is not heaven's message sent  
That virtue frees us.  
It shows us hard or penitent  
As Nature sees us!



## CATO BRADEN

I went to Winston Prairie to attend  
The funeral of Cato Braden. He  
Had died at fifty-one and I had known him  
Since he was twenty-four, but for fifteen  
Years or more I had not seen him, nor  
Exchanged with him more than a telegraphic  
Note about some trivial thing. Indeed  
I had not been in Winston Prairie during  
These fifteen years.

But on the train I thought  
Of Cato Braden, brought back all the days  
Through which I knew him, from the very first  
When he returned to Winston Prairie from  
De Pauw, or was it Valparaiso? Yet  
'Twas called a university I remember.  
And when I knew him first he kept at hand  
De Senectute, also Anthon's Homer,  
And lexicons in Latin and in Greek,  
Both unabridged. Sometimes he let me read  
The orations he had won the prizes with.  
And sometimes he would tell me what it meant  
To study at a university.  
And what they did and what the boys were like.

## CATO BRADEN

This Cato Braden was a happy soul  
At twenty-four, of a full noble brow,  
A gentle smiling mouth, an honest eye,  
A tall and handsome figure, altogether  
A man conspicuous for form, a bearing  
Of grace and courtliness, engaging ways;  
He might be called most lovable, he had  
The gift of friendship, was not envious,  
Could scarcely be enraged, was not offended  
By little things and often not by great.  
He had in short a nature fit to work  
With great capacity; had he combined  
An intellect but half his nature's worth  
He might have won the race. But many thought  
He promised much, his father most of all  
Because he had these virtues, and in truth  
Before his leaves unfolded with the spring  
His mind seemed apt, perhaps seemed measured full  
Of quality, the prizes he had won  
At Valparaiso pointed to the fruit  
He would produce at last.

So on the train  
I thought of Cato Braden. Then I thought  
Of when he came from school with his degree,  
And for that summer when he walked the square,  
Was whispered of as "Cato Braden, look."  
The first thing Winston Prairie knew it saw

## THE GREAT VALLEY

His name conjoined with that of Jerry Ott's —  
It was Ott and Braden, editors and owners,  
The Winston Prairie Eagle. Jerry Ott  
Was sixty-nine and wheezy from the fight  
For Jefferson Democracy, free trade.  
Besides the capital that Cato Braden  
Brought through his father to the enterprise  
Meant bitter war on enemies of truth.  
And Cato Braden's father had some wealth  
Made from the making of a vermifuge  
And a preposterous compound which he called  
Pesodorne; and I have always thought  
That Cato Braden's father garrisoned  
His factory for making patent nostrums  
By buying for his son this interest,  
And place of power in journalism; for  
The father's strong devotion to the church  
Did not protect him 'gainst the casual sneers  
Of Winston Prairie's paper called the Lance,  
Which used to print such things as this, to instance:  
"There's Braden's Vermifuge, well, Doctor Braden,  
Try your own vermifuge, let's see it work."

Well, anyway I know that Cato Braden  
Intended to pursue a legal course,  
And practice the profession in a city.  
I know his father bought for him this place  
With Jerry Ott as editor of the Eagle.

## CATO BRADEN

I know he went to work. I know he changed  
The paper's motto from "Hew to the line,"  
To *Principia non homines*. I know  
He used to sing "Over the Garden Wall,"  
While writing editorials and smoked  
A number of cheroots. I know he had  
A locked drawer where he kept a secret bottle  
From which he'd take a drink at noon or night.  
I know he was on terms of friendship with  
The milliner and dressmaker in a month  
After he came from Valparaiso. Yes,  
I know he advocated a gymnasium,  
And dancing hall for Winston Prairie, and  
He opened up a fight to get a park  
Where concerts might be given. Cato Braden  
Had these ideas at least. About this park  
A word remains to say.

Fernando Winston,  
Who founded Winston Prairie and surveyed  
The original town, laid out a square along  
The river for a pleasure ground; in time,  
Some fifty years or more, it was forgotten.  
And when this Cato Braden came to town  
And started as a journalist 'twas used  
In part by Winston Prairie's creamery;  
In part 'twas used for gardening by the pastor  
Of Winston Prairie's strongest church. But Cato

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Had searched the records, found them straight, began  
To agitate the park. And it was this,  
Together with *Principia non homines*,  
Free trade, the dressmaker and milliner,  
Perhaps the bottle in the drawer, whose secret  
Leaked out at once, that clove the people of  
The town into two groups of friends and foes.  
He had but just begun his editorship  
When I left Winston Prairie; after that  
Knew little of it, saw him but at times,  
Long separated, saw him not at all  
For fifteen years before his death, and now  
Because I was his friend was on the train  
His funeral to attend.

I drove to Oakland  
With Dr. Green and William Smoot the grocer.  
'Twas hot without a breeze, the town was still.  
The church bell tolled until we reached the grave,  
It was the church whose pastor used the square  
For gardening. And on the way I asked  
Why Cato Braden died at fifty-one.  
"Why, whisky," answered William Smoot, the grocer,  
"And women," for he had bad luck they say.  
"How is that, Doc, you know?"

And Dr. Green  
After a silence said: "It isn't true.



## CATO BRADEN

"He was as sound, so far as that's concerned  
"As any of us."

Then I asked again  
Why Cato Braden died at fifty-one.  
And Dr. Green said laughing, "Well, you know  
"They die at thirty-one and forty-one,  
"And sixty-one of what killed Cato Braden,  
"That's Bright's Disease."

"And whisky brings that on —"  
I ventured to assert.

"Sometimes" replied  
The man of medicine, "But other things  
"Produce it. There's a man's diathesis;  
"There's worry, over-work, sometimes disease  
"Suffered in childhood, leaving an effect  
"Like soil, all fertilized for such seed as this.  
"He should have drunk no whisky, yet he drank  
"Not half so much as Winston Prairie thought.  
"But you can see if whisky caused this thing  
"All whisky drinkers would be sure to have it,  
"Or die of it if not killed by a train."

We left the carriage, having reached the place  
Where Cato Braden's grave was dug, and stood  
Together in a company of fifty  
And heard the pastor pray for heaven's lessons

## THE GREAT VALLEY

From Cato Braden's life. And after that  
We separated, made the horses trot  
To reach our different destinations. I  
Looked up Will Boyden for a little talk  
Before my train left for the city.

Will

Was in his office with his sleeves rolled up,  
Cob-pipe in mouth, typing a legal paper,  
A narratio in slander, so he said.  
He smiled from ear to ear and dropped his work.  
"You're here for Cato's funeral," he said,  
And added, "It's a shame he had to die,  
Damned if it isn't."

Then I asked again

Why Cato Braden died at fifty-one,  
And Will said: "Winston Prairie, Illinois,  
Killed Cato Braden."

Tell me what you mean?"

Then Will refreshed his pipe and talked to me:  
"I'm fifty-two and good for twenty years  
I have no stronger frame than Cato Braden,  
But then I got a formula for life  
As time went on, and it was one that suited  
My nature, and I thrived as you can see.  
I have the power to draw the nutriment  
Out of this soil, and I get strength thereby

## CATO BRADEN

Wherewith to overcome the things that kill.  
I work, but then I play, I hunt and fish,  
I read and sometimes take a little trip.  
I don't drink whisky, not because I fear it,  
But I hate putting in myself such fire —  
Beer and light wines are pleasant, more like food  
Than stimulants. Well, Cato Braden started  
When 'Over the Garden Wall' was all the rage,  
'All Coons Look Alike to Me' was my  
Key-note for starting. You know what I mean :  
Between my day and his there's just the difference  
That lies between waltz time and syncopation ;  
Between the magic lantern and the movie,  
The rattan phaeton and Ford machine.  
These new things came along before he died,  
But he had made his life for the old things,  
Could not adjust himself, De Senectute  
And Valparaiso had not taught him how  
To reach out in the world from Winston Prairie  
And get the new things for his life. But if  
They taught him how he lost the secret here.  
For after all a place like Winston Prairie  
Will kill your spirit just as surely as  
The Island where they cooped up great Napoleon.  
In the first place what is a man to do  
With life in any place? That is the problem.  
And what could Cato Braden do with life  
In Winston Prairie? First he was as fitted

## THE GREAT VALLEY

To be a journalist as I, and if  
Endowed to be a journalist, just think  
Of editing The Eagle. But you see  
His father was at war then with the Lance  
Over that vermifuge and pesodorne.  
And under guise of starting him in life  
Bought Cato in the paper for the selfish  
Purpose of defending vermifuge.  
And Cato did it too, and put away  
From year to year his dream of studying  
The law and practicing in a city.  
During which time the poisons of this town  
Crept in his blood and stupefied and killed him.  
He married Mary Comfort, as you know.  
And Mary is — well, what I call a brood-mare,  
Although they had no children. What I mean  
She is a well-fleshed woman, sound of nerve,  
A help-eat, but she made a loyal wife  
Who had two eyes to see what Cato saw,  
And never an eye to help him see the things  
That lay around him, which he stumbled over.  
And marriage to my mind means this to man :  
He drains his body out to be a father,  
And drains his spirit out to be a husband,  
Unless the woman helps him see or feel  
More than he sees or feels for self. Well then  
The years went on. And every day at eight  
He could be seen toward his office bent.

## CATO BRADEN

At half past ten just as the morning train  
Was whistling for the crossing he would go  
To get the mail. Returning he would walk  
Along Main Street, slapping the folded News  
Against his leg. He scanned it in his office.  
At twelve o'clock he went to dinner, then  
As whisky made him eat, he over-ate  
And took a nap till two o'clock. At three  
One might discover him at solitaire —  
He had clipped from the morning paper quite enough  
To keep the boys in copy. Then at four  
He might be sitting at the livery stable,  
Or sometimes might be found in that back room  
Of Little's restaurant, where a keg of beer  
Shipped in was being tapped. At night perhaps  
He might be seen down there on Locust street,  
Waiting to enter where the milliner lived.  
So passed his life away from twenty-four  
To fifty-one. It's simple enough to ask  
Why not write for the Eagle, make it better,  
Give ideas to the people, help the town,  
Refresh the mind, read, study history,  
De Senectute? Fancy Teddy Roosevelt,  
Who's labored for this land with restless gifts,  
Tied down in Winston Prairie — well, you can't,  
He'd break the ties, and that's the point, you see.  
For Cato couldn't break them, had to stay,  
Incapable to extract the good that's here,



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Susceptible to all the bad that's here ;  
He was a nose half active  
Who enters in a room where gas escapes,  
Sits in the room unconscious of the gas  
Till he grows sluggish, lies him down to rest  
And dies unknowing. So I say it's true  
That Winston Prairie ruined Cato Braden  
And killed him in the end.

You must go see,  
Before you leave, our park called Willard Park,  
Named after Emma Willard, that devout  
Old woman, dead these fifteen years or so.  
She left enough to build a granite coping,  
Set out some trees, and buy park seats, a stone  
Whereon to carve the words, 'The gracious gift  
Of Emma Willard.' Well, this Cato Braden  
First talked this park, was first to tell the truth  
About this plot of ground. And more than that  
When Cato Braden came here he had dreams :  
He wrote at first that boxing, wrestling, racing  
Would help this town ; that games were needed here ;  
That Americans seemed ignorant of the art  
Of being gay, feeling light-hearted, wise  
To play ; that they were wise to work and pray,  
Fear happiness. And Cato Braden said  
The little town was cursed by just these things,  
And many human souls destroyed by them.

## CATO BRADEN

These were not thoughts of his, he found them somewhere,  
But knew them when he found them, that's his credit.  
What though he was a drunk man whom you ask  
What road to take, who points and gurgles guttural  
Sounds inarticulate? Or better still  
What though he was a sick man who in vain  
Attempts to make his household orders clear?  
For it was true that Cato Braden spoke  
About these things at first, then gave them up.  
For no one seemed responsive to his plans.  
And some there were who sneered, and others said  
He'd better help the church, and leave alone  
The questions which make bitterness and strife,  
Which was their way of speaking of the square  
Which Cato tried to make into a park.  
They say a lung will turn to stone or steel  
When men work in the filings and the dust.  
At last the dust of Winston Prairie turned  
His soul to dust.

You see old Jerry Ott  
Had left a son his interest in the Eagle,  
And Cato Braden died right at his table  
While playing solitaire. This son came in  
And found him dead, a card clutched in his hand.  
The card was, strange enough, the deuce of clubs!  
This son was glad that Cato Braden died  
For now he runs the Eagle by himself.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

This Cato Braden had three strains of thought.  
I never met him lately but he talked  
Some one of them, at times all three of them.  
One was the American town must be improved,  
So better to conserve the souls and bodies  
Of boys and girls. And even when the movie,  
And other things of this day came along  
He still maintained they did not meet the case.  
He never said what thing was requisite.  
But in a general way I think he meant  
A stronger, and more truthful and more natural  
Outlook and attitude would save a town  
From dust, and mold and death. For once he said:  
"This winter I shall read Grote's History."  
He never read it. But I think he meant  
He would find out the secret of the Greeks.  
And then he'd say the young, the middle aged  
The old made separate spheres of feeling, thought;  
And that a town should not be ruled by one,  
Should not be governed as all folks were old,  
Or young, or middle aged, but each should have  
The town for his according to his age,  
And thought and vital power, within his sphere  
And period of life; these separate spheres  
Should move untroubled by the others, move  
Free, independent of the other spheres.

I talked with Cato Braden for the last

## CATO BRADEN

A week ago last night. He said to me :  
I wake these mornings lately with the thought  
Another chance will come to me, that death  
Will bring another chance. And then he said :  
This is the way of it. When you are young  
You say in five years I shall take a trip,  
See New York City, go abroad perhaps.  
When five years pass you do not take the trip.  
Then you say in a year I'll take the trip.  
And so it goes, while you say in a year,  
Next year, next year, until at last you say  
No, never now ! Well, now you'd think a man  
Would weep when he stands up against the wall,  
And knows he cannot climb the wall. But no,  
Something still whispers you will do it yet.  
And then you know it must be after death,  
In life again, the chance will come to you.  
For you know well it is not in this life.  
Then Cato Braden said : Not in this life  
Shall I read Grote, I could not understand it  
After these years in Winston Prairie — still  
I have a feeling I shall know about it  
Somewhere, somehow.

You'd better catch your train.

It's good to see you. Up there in the city  
Think sometimes of the American village and  
What may be done for conservation of  
The souls of men and women in the village."

## WINSTON PRAIRIE

"What made you buy those lots in Winston Prairie?  
If you had come to me I could have told you  
About the circuit judge, the state's attorney,  
The county judge, the county clerk, the treasurer,  
The assessors and collectors who belong  
To what we call a court-house ring. You know  
They run the county, re-elect themselves,  
Play with the local bosses, stand in league  
With sellers of cement, and brick and lumber,  
And with the papers given the public printing,  
And with the sharks who buy in property  
For taxes sold, and with the intriguing thieves  
Who make improvements, levy the assessments  
For side-walk, sewers."

So my friend to me.  
"Good land," I answered, "I inherited them,  
I did not buy these lots. But apropos  
Of what you say, I've wondered what's the matter.  
I write and write for statements of my taxes,  
And cannot get them. Then I take the train,  
And travel through the heat to Winston Prairie.  
And I stand before a window asking for them.



## WINSTON PRAIRIE

Your property was sold, I am informed.  
So I redeem, and go out to the grave-yard  
To look at Cato Braden's grave, and then  
Catch the next train for home. A week or so  
Elapses and I get a letter — hum !  
Winston Prairie — office of the controller ;  
Your property was sold for special numbered  
Two thousand and eighty-six, when you reply  
Please mention sale 1019. — Damn these thieves !  
So I pay that. I see ! your court-house ring, —  
The men who're sworn to enforce the law are those  
Who break it, and who use it to despoil you —  
Well, let me tell you.

In this very June  
I went to Winston Prairie on this errand,  
And after I had written several times  
To get a statement. I arrived at noon —  
And yet the court-house offices were closed,  
The treasurer's, the clerk's, controller's, all.  
I met a janitor who said : All closed  
Till half past one. That meant I'd miss my train  
Back to Chicago, and would have to stay  
In Winston Prairie until six o'clock.  
I sat down in the hall-way with a curse.  
But in a minute there were hideous yells,  
Shrieks, curses, as it were of women beaten,  
Tortured, or strangled. So I went to see,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And found a door behind which I could hear  
Intolerable tears, the scratching of weak hands  
Against the door and wall. What is the matter?  
I hallooed through the door. O, go to hell  
A woman said, you know what is the matter.  
I don't, I said, I'll help you if I can.  
Then followed sobs and wails, and incoherent  
Blubbering of words. At last I saw a finger  
Stuck through the broken plaster by the door,  
And leaning down I said: look through at me.  
And then I stooped and looking through the crack  
Saw a gray eye, which looked as it might be  
Of Slavic birth. But who can read an eye  
Shown singly through a crack? So while I talked  
To get the story of these girls in prison,  
(For where they were was called the calaboose,  
Built in the court-house) some one back of me  
Said: They'll be quiet in due time, the cooler  
Cools people off. I turned and saw a man  
Who seemed to be a judge, and was a judge,  
As I discovered later. Well, I said,  
I cannot bear to see a human being  
In such distress and terror — what's their ages?  
One's sixteen and one's seventeen, said the judge,  
But they are bad ones, so I made the fine  
Enough to hold them thirty days. I asked  
What did they do? They were soliciting,  
The judge replied, and here in Winston Prairie

## WINSTON PRAIRIE

The law is law and we enforce the law.  
We do not do as you do in Chicago.  
I felt my heart shut tight its valves and stop,  
And was about to say : You are a fool.  
You are what some would have America,  
You are an Illinoisan, damn your soul.  
You are a figure in the court-house ring,  
Whereof the tax shark is a figure too.  
But then I thought these girls might prove to be  
Worth while some time. But even if they live  
Street walkers all their lives, they stone no prophets,  
Devour no widows' houses, do less harm  
Than court-house rings and judges in the rings.  
So this is what I said : May I enquire  
What are your Honor's hours for holding court ?  
And he replied : Court has adjourned till two.  
I hold till six o'clock, we do not loaf  
As judges in Chicago do, good-day !

Well, then at half past one I paid my taxes,  
With interest, penalties and all the costs.  
At two o'clock I stood before the bar  
And to the judge addressed these words : Your Honor,  
I represent Miss Christine Leichentrirt,  
Miss Garda Gerstenburg, who are in jail  
Under your Honor's sentence. I have seen  
The state's attorney, who is satisfied  
To let them go, if all the costs are paid.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

I went to see him on a matter of taxes,  
And this came up. The state's attorney rose  
And said: Your Honor, they are very young,  
And though they have been caught before at this,  
And warned that Winston Prairie is no place  
For them to ply their trade, I am inclined  
To think they will not break our laws again.

I thought I saw his honor's eye light up  
As if it caught a wireless, so he said:  
"The court is satisfied." I paid the costs  
And took Christine and Garda to Chicago.  
But at the station, as I said good bye,  
Christine flared up: You don't suppose that I  
Will let you pay those costs, I am not cheap.  
I may be bad, but I am square, she said.  
And I have money in my room, come on  
To Twelfth and Wabash and I'll pay you back  
For me and Garda.

No, I said, go on.  
Try to be good, but if you can't be good,  
Be wise, and do not go to Winston Prairie.  
I turned and disappeared among the crowds.

## WILL BOYDEN LECTURES

The Sunday after Cato Braden died  
Will Boyden lectured in the Masons' Hall  
Upon the theme, "Was Jesus Really Great?"  
At first he pointed out that Jesus knew  
No history except that of the Jews.  
And if he'd heard of Athens never spoke  
A word about it, never read a line  
Of Homer, Sophocles, or Aristotle,  
Or Plato, or of Virgil, never a word  
Concerning Egypt's wisdom, or of India's.  
And then he dropped this point with the remark  
That one could know one's people's history  
And that alone, and still be great, perhaps.  
But still he thought it was unfortunate  
That Jesus gave the Hebrews such a lift  
So that to-day they rule the Occident  
Where Athens should have ruled, if only Time  
Had given her the right dramatic touch  
To catch the populace.

He then declared  
That Jesus was a poet, but he said :  
"What are his figures? Never a word of stars,  
And never a word of oceans, nor of mountains



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Save Olivet or Zion, so you see  
His limitations as to imagery.  
Then have you noted how his sombre soul  
Picked blasted fig-trees, tares, the leprous poor,  
And sepulchres and sewers, dirty cups,  
Wherewith to make interpretations, yes  
He spoke of lilies, too. Well, so have I.  
And yet you people call me pessimist  
Because I've tried to rescue Winston Prairie,  
And have not shrunk from charging Winston Prairie  
With Cato Braden's death. The difference  
Between the Man of Galilee and me  
Is this: He wanted to fulfill the law  
Of Moses and Isaiah, make Jerusalem,  
Which was a Winston Prairie in a way,  
A Hebrew citadel to rule the world.  
And I, if I could have my way, would make  
Of Winston Prairie Athens."

Then he said

"I have four thoughts to-day to touch upon.  
The first one is concerning hogs — you start:  
Well, look at Matthew chapter eight and find  
How certain hogs had cast in them the devils  
Of fierceness, blindness, lustfulness and ran  
Down in the sea to kill themselves for being  
Made perfecter as hogs. Go get some hogs  
And let me try my hand at exorcising

## WILL BOYDEN LECTURES

The Winston Prairie devils which destroyed  
Poor Cato Braden.

“My next thought is found  
In Matthew chapter nine; and it is this;  
When Jesus saw the multitude all fainting,  
And scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd,  
His soul was stirred — that is a way with genius,  
Whether it be your Altgeld, Pericles,  
Or yet your artist soul like Heinrich Heine.  
But think of this: If you would lead and save  
The multitude, assuming that can be,  
Shall you accomplish it by rules and laws  
Applied externally, which is the way  
Ecclesiastic powers pursue and find  
Divine authority in Jesus for it?  
Or shall you teach the way of opening up  
The soul of man to sun-light, letting in  
The Power which is around us, in the which  
We live and move, and so give chance for growth  
To what is in us? For your shepherd drives.  
No, Jesus hit it better when he spoke  
Of leaven than of shepherds.

“So if one  
Find leaven and would give it, let there be  
A few to watch the final hour with him,  
When he would be delivered from the cup,  
But knows it cannot be, that to refuse  
The cup is to deny the inexorable law.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

"So now I come to what is chiefest here:  
Destroy this temple and I will re-build it  
In three days. Now you know what preachers say:  
This means the resurrection — not at all!  
These were the greatest words that Jesus said.  
And here his genius seized its fullest power,  
Here was it that he hid Jerusalem  
Under his hands as if it were a toy,  
And tossed the world up as it were a ball.  
Why, what are temples, cities, cultures, ages  
Of beauty, glory, but the work of genius?  
What earth and stone and flesh but plastic stuff  
Responsive to the touch of prophet hands?  
What Winston Prairie, what America  
And all this turbulence of bobbing heads  
In fields and markets, temples, halls across  
This continent of sovereign states but puppets  
Which may be changed in flesh, in deepest spirit,  
Made more erect, heroic, God-like, wise  
By genius' hands, not revolutionists',  
Nor shepherds'. So destroy America,  
But not by picks and axes, let it be  
As in the movies where a lovelier face  
Steals in and blots with brighter light a face,  
Which must fade out to let the lovelier face  
Complete the story.

Now in a moment's silence  
Let's pray for Cato Braden."

## THE DESPLAINES FOREST

The sun has sunk below the level plain,  
And yet above the forest's leafy gloom  
The glory of the evening lightens still.  
Smooth as a mirror is the river's face  
With Heaven's light, and all its radiant clouds  
And shadows which against the river's shore  
Already are as night. From some retreat  
Obscure and lonely, evening's saddest bird  
Whistles, and beyond the water comes  
The musical reply, and silence reigns —  
Save for the noisy chorus of the frogs,  
And undistinguished sounds of faint portent  
That night has come. There is a rustic bridge  
Which spans the stream, from which we look below  
At Heaven above, till revery reclaims  
The mind from hurried thought and merges it  
Into the universal mind which broods  
O'er such a scene. Strange quietude o'erspreads  
The restless flame of being, and the soul  
Beholds its source and destiny and feels  
Not sorrowful to sink into the breast  
Of that large life whereof it is a part.  
What are we? But the question is not solved

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Here in the presence of intensest thought,  
Where nature stills the clamor of the world,  
And leaves us in communion with ourselves.  
Hence to the strivings of the clear-eyed day  
What take we that shall mitigate the pangs  
That each soul is alone, and that all friends  
Gentle and wise and good can never soothe  
The ache of that sub-consciousness which is  
Something unfathomed and unmedicined?  
Yet this it is which keeps us in the path  
Of some ambition cherished or pursued;  
The still, small voice that is not quieted  
By disregard, but ever speaks to us  
Its mandates while we wake or sleep, and asks  
A closer harmony with that great scheme  
Which is the music of the universe.

So as the cherubim of Heaven defend  
The realms of the unknown with flaming swords,  
Thence are we driven to the world which is  
Ours to be known through Art, who beckons us  
To excellence, and in her rarer moods  
Casts shadowy glances of serener lands,  
Where all the serious gods, removed from stress  
And interruption, build, as we conceive,  
In fellowship that knows not that reserve  
Which clouds the hearts of those who wish to live  
As they, in that large realm of perfect mind.



## THE GARDEN

I do not like my garden, but I love  
The trees I planted and the flowers thereof.  
How does one choose his garden? O with eyes  
O'er which a passion or illusion lies.  
Perhaps it wakens memories of a lawn  
You knew before somewhere. Or you are drawn  
By an old urn, a little gate, a roof  
Which soars into a blue sky, clear, aloof.  
One buys a garden gladly. Even the worst  
Seems tolerable or beautiful at first.  
Their very faults give loving labor scope :  
One can correct, adorn; 'tis sweet to hope  
For beauty to emerge out of your toil,  
To build the walks and fertilize the soil.  
Before I knew my garden or awoke  
To its banality I set an oak  
At one end for a life-long husbandry,  
A white syringa and a lilac tree,  
Close to one side to hide a crumbling wall,  
Which was my neighbor's, held in several  
Title and beyond my right to mend —  
One cannot with an ancient time contend.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Some houses shadowed me. I did not dream  
The sun would never look o'er them and gleam,  
Save at the earliest hour. So all the day  
One half my garden under twilight lay.  
Another soul had overlooked the shade :  
I found the boundaries of a bed he made  
For tulips. Well, I had a fresher trust  
And spent my heart upon this sterile dust.  
What thing will grow where never the sun shines ?  
Vainly I planted flowering stalks and vines.  
What years to learn the soil ! Why even weeds  
Look green and fresh. But if one concedes  
Salvia will flourish not, nor palest phlox  
One might have hope left for a row of box.

Why is it that some silent places thrill  
With elfin comradeship, and others fill  
The heart with sickening loneliness ? My breast  
Seems hollow for great emptiness, unrest  
Casting my eyes about my garden where  
I still must live, breathing its lifeless air.  
Why should I have a garden anyway ?  
I have so many friends who pass the day  
In streets or squares, or little barren courts,  
I fancy there are gardens of all sorts,  
Far worse than mine. And who has this delight :  
There's my syringa with its blooms of white !  
It flourishes in my garden ! In this brief

## THE GARDEN

Season of blossoms and unfolding leaf  
What if I like my garden not but love  
The oak tree and the lilac tree thereof,  
And hide my face, lest one my rapture guess,  
Amid the white syringa's loveliness?

## THE TAVERN

*(For my daughter Madeline)*

Nothing disturbed my night of sleep,  
I wonder that I ever woke  
It was so heavy, was so deep  
I scarce had heard the thunder-stroke.  
So what was drinking, feasting, talking  
By guests who came and guests who went,  
Or those who spent the time in walking  
The halls and rooms in argument  
About the Tavern? Some declared  
No better Tavern could be built.  
And others called it a deception,  
Its purest gold but thinnest gilt,  
A cruel cheat considering  
No other Tavern gave reception  
To folks who might be wayfaring  
Anywhere in the whole wide land.

I woke a stranger to it all,  
But quickly grew to understand  
The ways and customs which prevailed :  
Those who won favor, those who failed ;  
What feasting rooms had echoed laughter ;

## THE TAVERN

What kisses stolen in what hall ;  
What corners where the old had cried ;  
What stairways where the breathless bride  
Paused for a moment just to toss  
Among the bridesmaids her bouquet ;  
What rooms where men in work or play  
Approved or cursed for gain or loss  
The Tavern's roof-tree, roof and rafter.

Then when I woke, as I have said,  
Save a few children there was none  
Who was not older far than I.  
Many were trembling gray of head ;  
The strong walked forth in rain or sun  
And seemed all danger to defy.  
All welcomed me and called me fair,  
And told me strange events which passed  
Around the Tavern while I slept.  
Soon there were changes. Scarce aware  
Of their departure many stept  
Out of the door and seemed to cast  
Their fortunes elsewhere, but as fast  
New guests came in to take the places  
Of those who left. And through the day  
I lost the old, remembering faces  
Freshly arrived. When it was noon  
I knew what things were opportune,  
I had become one of the crowd



## THE GREAT VALLEY

In all their ways initiate :  
Knew what their love was, what their hate,  
Myself stole kisses in the hall,  
And saw the old who sat and cried  
In corners, saw the rosy bride  
Pause for a moment just to toss  
Among the bridesmaids her bouquet,  
Where I stood best man to the groom.  
Was myself of the noisy room,  
Where men in work or men in play  
Approve or curse the gain or loss.

Toward afternoon I seemed to feel  
More people knew me than I knew.  
Then it was good to meet with you.  
I saw you as you left the stair.  
And who were you ? I do not dare  
To praise your brow, or paint your hair,  
Your eyes how gray, or were they blue ?  
A pain strikes through me if I let  
The full strength of my love have sway.  
I only know I can forget  
All others who had gone away  
Remembering our happy day  
Together in the house and yard.  
It was to you all fair and new.  
You listened with such rapt regard  
To all the stories of the guests,

## THE TAVERN

And what had been their interests.  
And was the Tavern just the same  
As it had been before you came,  
You asked me, and I answered, yes,  
No change, my dear, not even the name.

No change, except the people change,  
And change they do, I must confess.  
In truth a few alone remain  
Of those who lived here when I first  
Entered the door there, most are strange.  
And as I rose much earlier  
Than you arose, you may suppose  
I shall grow drowsy, yet who knows  
Before you do, and leave the stir  
The dancing, feasting, just to creep  
Back for another night of sleep.  
I'd like so well to stay awake  
And watch the dancing for your sake.  
It may be, though it scarce may be —  
No one remained awake for me.

You cannot fail to find the bed  
When you are sleepy, but no doubt  
It will be black with the light out.  
Come dear, that sleep is loveliest  
Where side by side two lovers rest,  
That sweetens sleep — it may be best !

## O SAEPE MECUM

(*For E. J. S.*)

Edward! you knew the city and you knew  
Where dancing and where music were,  
And every hall and theatre,  
And every green purlieu

Of gardens where beneath the vines and trees  
One might sip beer and be consoled  
By music mixed with talk, behold  
The summer's devotees

About the tables, idling June away.  
And you knew chicory and cress,  
With French or Mayonnaise could dress  
A salad, growing gay

As you poured Burgundy or Rhenish wine,  
Or had a sirloin brought to see  
If it were ripe, the recipe  
For broiling it, to dine

Thereon in fitting state, the waiter took  
And bowed in admiration, then  
You snapped your silver case again  
And from the holders shook

## O SAEPE MECUM

Such cigarettes as Turkish grandees smoke,  
And blew the perfumed incense forth,  
Descanting on our life, the worth  
Of lawyers, noted folk :

Of judges, politicians, governors,  
Until the dinner came at last.  
And there amid the rich repast  
We poor solicitors

Gloried in life, and ruddy faced would laugh  
At any mishap, any fate  
That we could fancy might await,  
And glorying would quaff

Incredible goblets of the quickening juice,  
With blackest coffee topping all,  
And afterwards a cordial —  
Nothing we could abuse

And nothing hurt us, Edward ! It was well  
We lived, I think, and memories stored :  
For now I am a little bored  
With the invariable

And settled round of nights and days wherein  
I must have sleep to work, and keep  
Abstemious to work and sleep —  
While you long since have been

## THE GREAT VALLEY

The tangled lion of a woman's hair  
Who reads you novels and the news,  
And mends you, tends you, even brews  
Your broth and gives you care

In these dyspeptic mornings. As for me  
The cafés, gardens haunt me yet.  
I go about as one who can't forget  
A dead felicity —

The Bismarck, Rector's where I enter not —  
The music all is changed — and where  
No faces that we knew are there,  
And where we are forgot.



## MALACHY DEGAN

Malachy, you stand a referee to judge  
Under a torrent of blue light  
The naked pugilists who fight,  
Grim faces with a smudge

Of blood, or on the sliding arms or backs,  
There on a platform roped, in palls  
Of smoke to the roof of Tattersall's,  
And where the iterant cracks

Of matches struck for lights prick through the hum  
Of voices over toned by cries  
Of "Finish him," "Look at his glassy eyes,"  
"That sounded like a drum."

When the timekeeper's gong went clang! clang!  
And a hush came over us, as then  
Bath robes slipped off, the fighting men  
Out of their corners sprang,

And in between the tangled arms and legs,  
And clinches which you break, you glide  
Red-haired, athletic, watchful eyed,  
And like a lager keg's

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Round fulness is your chest, your arms all bare,  
Coatless, a figure memorable.  
You should not be forgotten — well  
And if it be to dare

The censure of a taste American  
To celebrate your courage, wit,  
I write you down what here is writ :  
A referee, a man !

A judge who loved the game and whose decree  
Had no taint on it, was more pure  
Than much of our judicature,  
Of every knavery free.

And what is here to shock or shake such nerves  
As children's are, delicate women's ?  
There goes the short hook of Fitzsimmons,  
And Thorne a moment swerves,

Then topples over, and lies quiet while  
You count from one slowly to nine.  
And Thorne lies there without a sign  
Of life, but with a smile

After a time gets up, and reels across  
The ring to his own corner, there  
Flops wobbly in his corner's chair,  
And wonders at his loss.

## MALACHY DEGAN

While full ten thousand cheer, and watch you shake  
The master hand, the general's.  
Such was our sport at Tattersall's  
Before the Puritan rake

Combed through the city. Now the sport is dead,  
And you are dust these several years.  
And we who drift to stale careers,  
And live along and tread

The old deserted ways we loved and knew,  
Ask sometimes how it was a cough  
Could seize upon you, take you off —  
A lad as strong as you ?

## MY DOG PONTO

If I say to you "Come, Ponto, want some meat?"  
You laugh in your dog-way and bark your "Yes."  
And if I say "Shall we go walking" or  
"Stand up, nice Ponto," then you stand up, or  
If I say to you "Lie down" you lie down.  
You know what meat is, what it is to walk.  
You see the meat perhaps or get an image  
Of scampering on the street or chasing dogs  
While sniffing in fresh air, exploring bushes.  
Upon these levels our minds meet at once,  
As if they were the same stuff for such thoughts.  
But if I look into your eye and say :  
I'll read to you a chapter on harmonics,  
Here's mad Spinoza's close wrought demonstration  
Of God as substance, here is Isaac Newton's  
Great book on gravitation, here's a thesis  
Upon the logos, of the word made man.  
Or if I say let's talk about my soul —  
Since I have talked to yours in terms of meat —  
Which sails out like a spider on its thread  
Through mathematics, music, — look at you  
You merely lie there with half open eye,  
And thump your tail quite feebly just because,

## MY DOG PONTO

And for no other reason save I'm talking,  
And I'm your master and you're fond of me,  
And through affection would no doubt be glad  
To know what I am saying, as 'twere meat  
I might be saying. But I know a way  
To make you howl for things not understood:  
It makes you howl to hear my new Victrola  
With a Beethoven record, why is this?  
Perhaps this is to you a maddening token  
Of realms that lie above the realms of meat,  
And torture you because they have suggestions  
Of things beyond you.

But in any case,  
Dear Ponto, if you were an infidel  
You might say "What's harmonics? they're a joke."  
"And who's Spinoza, Newton, they are myths."  
"And mathematics, music, can you eat them,"  
"For what you cannot eat has no existence."  
Deny them as you will these spheres of thought  
Lie as the steps of mountains over you.  
They wait for you to gain them, you can find them  
By rising to them, then how real they are!  
As real as scampering when I take a walk.  
But are they all? How do I know what spheres  
Of life lie all around me and above me,  
Just waiting not for me, but till I climb  
And rest awhile and take their meaning in.



## THE GREAT VALLEY

How do I know what hand plays a Victrola  
With records greater than Beethoven's song,  
Which make me howl as piteously as you?  
But here again our minds meet on a level:  
I know no more than you do why I howl;  
Nor what it is that makes me howl, nor why,  
Though not content with meat, I want to know,  
And keep as all my own this higher music.

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

How long have you been waiting? Not so long?  
I'm glad of that. You found the place at once.  
Well, there's the Campus Martius, when you're there  
You see above this Collis Hortulorum,  
A good place for two men like us to meet:  
Here's where luxurious souls have their abodes.  
That's Sallust's garden there. They do not care  
So much about us as some others do.  
There is a tolerance comes from being rich,  
An urbane soul is fashioned by a villa.  
Our faith is not to these a wicked thing,  
A deadly superstition as some deem it.  
But Mark, my son, there's Rome below you there —  
What temples, arches, under the full moon!  
Here let us sit beside this chestnut tree,  
And while the soft wind blows out of the sea  
Let's finish up our talks. You must know all  
Wherewith to write the story ere I die  
Beneath the wrath of Nero. See that light,  
Faint like a little candle — I passed there.  
That's one of our poor men, they make us lamps  
Wherewith to light the streets and Nero's gardens.  
We shall be lamps they'll wish to snuff in time.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

We met to-night at one Silvanus' house.  
And I was telling them about the night  
When in Gethsemane you followed Him,  
Having a cloth around your naked body.  
And how you laid hold on him, left the cloth  
And fled. But when you write this you can say  
"A certain young man," leaving out your name,  
You may not wish to have it known 'twas you  
Who ran away, as I would like to hide  
How I fell into sleep and failed to watch,  
And afterwards declared I knew Him not:  
But as for me omit no thing. The world  
Will gain for seeing me rise out of weakness  
To strength, and out of fear to boldness. Time  
Has wrought his wonders in me, I am rock,  
Let hell beat on me, I shall stand from now!

Then don't forget the first man that he healed.  
There's deep significance in this, my son,  
That first of all he'd take an unclean spirit  
And cast it out. Then second was my mother  
Cured of her fever, just as you might say:  
Be rid of madness, things that tear and plague,  
Then cool you of the fever of vain life.  
But don't forget to write how he would say  
"Tell no man of this," say that and no more.  
Though I may think he said it lest the crowds  
That followed him would take his strength for healing,

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

And leave no strength for words, let be and write  
"Tell no man of this" simply. For you see  
These madmen quieted, these lepers cleaned  
Had soon to die, all now are dead, perhaps.  
And with them ends their good. But what he said  
Remains for generations yet to come, with power  
To heal and heal. My son, preserve your notes,  
Of what I've told you, even above your life.  
Make many copies lest one script be lost.  
I shall not to another tell it all  
As I have told it you.

But as for me  
What merit have I that I saw and said  
"Thou art the Christ?" One sees the thing he  
sees.

That is a matter of the eye — behold  
What is the eye? Is there an Eye Power which  
Produces eyes, a primal source of seeing,  
An ocean of beholding, as the ocean  
Makes rivers, streams and pools, so does this Power  
Make eyes? You take an egg and keep it warm  
About a day, then break the shell and look :  
You'll find dark spots on either side of what  
Will be the head in time, these will be eyes  
In season, but just now they cannot see,  
Although the Eye Power back of them can see  
Both what they are and how to make them eyes

## THE GREAT VALLEY

By giving them its quality and strength.  
And all the time while these dark spots emerge  
From yolk to eyes, this Rome is here no less,  
This moon, these stars, this wonder! Take a child  
It stares at flowers and tears them, or again  
It claws the whiteness of its mother's breast,  
Sees nothing but the things beneath its nose.  
The world around it lies here to be seen,  
And will be seen from boyhood on to age  
In different guises, aspects, richnesses  
According to the man, for every man  
Sees different from his fellow. What's an eye?  
I say not what's an eye, but what is here  
For eyes to see? What wonders in that sky  
Beyond my eye! What living things concealed  
Beneath my feet in grass or moss or slime,  
As small to crickets as they are to us!  
For Nero at the Circus holds a ruby  
Before his eye to give his eye more sight  
To see the games and tortures. So I say  
There was no merit in me when I said  
"Thou art the Christ."

Let's think of eyes this way:  
The lawyers said there's nothing in this fellow.  
His family beheld no wonder in him.  
Have Mary Magdalene and I invented  
These words, this story? — who are we to do so,—



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A fallen woman and a fisherman !  
Or did this happen ? Did we see these things ?  
Did Mary see him risen and did I ?  
Were other eyes still dark spots on the yolk,  
And were our eyes full grown and did we see ?  
Is this a madman's world where I can talk,  
And have you write for centuries to read  
And play the fool with them ? Or do all things  
Of spirit, as of stars, of spring and growth  
Proceed in order, under law to ends ?  
No, Mark, my son, this is the truth, so write,  
Preserve this story taken from my lips.  
My work is almost done. Rome is the end  
Of all my labors, I have faith The Eye  
Will give me other eyes for other worlds !

Why should I not believe this ? Not all seasons  
Are for unfolding. In the winter time  
You cannot see the miracle of birth,  
Of germinating seeds, of blossoming.  
Why not then that one time for seeing Death  
Go up like mist before the rising sun ?  
And in this single instance of our Lord  
Arising from the grave, see all men rise,  
And all men's souls discovered in his soul,  
Their quality and essence, strength made clear ?  
And why not I the seer of these things ?  
Why should there be another and not I ?

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And I declare to you that untold millions  
In centuries untold will live and die  
By these words which you write, as I have told them.  
And nation after nation will be moulded,  
As heated wax is moulded, by these words.  
And spirits in their inmost power will feel  
Change and regeneration through them — well, what  
then?

Do you say God is living, that this world,  
These constellations, move by law, that all  
This miracle of life and light is held  
In harmony, and that the soul of man  
Moves not in order, but that it's allowed  
To prove an anarchy to itself, sole thing  
That turns upon itself, sole thing that's shown  
The path that leads no whither? is allowed  
To feed on falsehood? that it's allowed  
To wander lawless to its ruin, fooled  
By what it craves, by what it feels, by eyes  
That swear the truth of what they see? by words  
Which you will write from words I have affirmed?  
And do you say that Life shall prove the foe  
Of life, and Law of law? Or do you say  
The child's eyes see reality which see  
The poppy blossoms or the mother's breast,  
And this Rome and these stars do not exist  
Because the child's eyes cannot compass them,  
And get their image? Shall we trust our vision

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mounting to higher things, or only trust  
Those things which all have seen except the souls  
Who have not soared, or risen to the gift  
Of seeing what seemed walking trees grow clear  
As men or angels? No, it cannot be.  
Man's soul, the chiefest flower of all we know,  
Is not the toy of Malice or of Sport.  
It is not set apart to be betrayed,  
Or gulled to its undoing, left to dash  
Its hopeless head against this rock's exception,  
No water for its thirst, no Life to feed it,  
No law to guide it, though this universe  
Is under Law, no God to mark its steps,  
Except the God of worlds and suns and stars,  
Who loves it not, loves worlds and suns and stars,  
And them alone, and leaves the soul to pass  
Unfathered — lets me have a madman's dream  
And gives it such reality that I  
Take fire and light the world, convincing eyes  
Left foolish to believe. It cannot be. . . .

Go write what I have told you, come what will  
I'm going to the catacombs to pray.

## MARSYAS

Pallas Athena in an hour of ease  
From guarding states and succoring the wise,  
Pressed wistfully her lips against a flute  
Made by a Phrygian youth from resonant wood,  
Cut near Sangarius. Upon a bank  
Made sweet by daisies and anemone  
She sat with godly wisdom exercised  
Blowing her breath against the stubborn tube  
That it might answer and vibrate in song.  
But while she played, down-looking, she beheld  
A serpent's eyes, which by the water's edge  
Lay coiled among the reeds, as if aware  
Of the divinity that filled the place.  
Then Athena saw her image in the cove,  
Where like a silver mirror, motionless  
Sangarius lay, and seeing her own face  
Thus suddenly, was stricken with surprise  
Of her fair forehead wrinkled, and her lips  
Pursed and distorted as she strove to curb  
The resisting instrument. So with a smile,  
A little laugh, which brought her beauty back,  
And gilded like a gradual burst of sun  
The water where the charmed serpent lay

## MARSYAS

Lifting his head up to the living warmth,  
She threw the flute down, and Olympus way  
Vanished, from sight.

Marsyas all the while  
Beneath an oak's shade by the water's edge  
Had drowsed voluptuously, and heard the notes,  
Dreaming some shepherd youth who watched his sheep  
Upon a near-by hill which to the swale  
Sloped in luxuriance, upon a reed  
His idle fancies loosened from the stops.  
But when Athena passed him, since he heard  
A roar of wings, as when a flock of quail  
Up-fly the hunter's step, he woke to find  
The forest silent and the music gone.  
Then straying toward the rushes, he espied  
The flute upon the golden sands, and took it  
And tried his lips upon it, where the lips  
Of Pallas Athena left it fragrant, moist,  
And with a soul, which to the artless breath  
Of the rude Satyr gave melodious speech.  
So thinking that the music was his own  
And that the flute was but a worthless wood  
Save that it made his genius manifest,  
And swollen with conceit Marsyas sent  
A word of challenge to the Delphic god,  
Apollo of the cithara, for trial  
Of skill in music, saying who should prove



## THE GREAT VALLEY

The victor might do with the other what  
Pleased him to do, and let the Muses judge.

But when Athena heard Apollo laugh,  
Where the nine Muses gossiped of the dare  
Which Marsyas uttered, for the lower meadows  
Of flowered Olympus whispered of the thing  
In jest and quip, and knowing that her soul  
Still echoed in the flute, but would anon  
Fade from it as the perfume from a girdle  
Tinct by the touch of Aphrodite's hand,  
Spoke to Apollo: "Grant a little time  
Wherein the Satyr may improve his skill."  
To which the Muses nodded 'mid their smiles.  
But yet Apollo gave assent, though teased  
By reason of their chatter and the thought  
Hid in Athena's word that any respite  
Granted the Satyr could prosper his success.

Meanwhile Marsyas waited for the day  
Appointed of Apollo. Near Sangarius  
And through the woodlands tireless with the flute:  
Sometimes in imitative harmony  
Mocking the sound of fluttering leaves, and now  
The musical winds that blow in early spring  
Around a peak of dancing asphodel  
Where the sea warms them, and at other times  
The little waves that patter on the sands

## MARSYAS

Of old Sangarius rich in numerous flags.  
And once he strove with music's alchemy  
To turn to sound the sunlight of the morn  
Which fills the senses as illuminate dew  
Quickens the ovule of the tiger-flower.  
Again he sang the sorrow of his youth  
When a wild nymph after one day of bliss  
Fled him while sleeping. And again he beat  
The rhythm lying at the root of life  
Which marks the whirling planets. And Apollo  
Hearing betimes a note of purest tone  
Fall like a star, betrayed his wonderment —  
Whereat the muses vexed him with their smiles  
And whisperings to each other. But Apollo  
Could sense the Satyr's waning skill, which dulled  
With its employment, as Athena's soul  
Died from the flute, although the Satyr knew not  
Each day of waiting doomed him :

Then at last  
The day dawned for the trial of their skill,  
And Marsyas came bearing the hollow flute —  
For all had left it of Athena's soul.  
Then on Sangarius' wooded banks the muses  
To judge assembled, fair, majestic.  
With arms entwined some close together stood,  
Some half-reclined upon the flowery grass,  
But all bore in their eyes the light of mirth

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Suppressed, half-hidden. Then, for that Euterpe  
Was mistress of the flute, since it was deemed  
Fair to the Satyr that the contest be  
Judged by the flute, gave signal to begin.  
Whereat Apollo struck the cithara  
To test the strings, and all the wood was hushed,  
Awed by the magic of its harmony.  
But when Marsyas blew upon the flute  
A fear coursed through him as his wonder rose  
Whether Apollo had bewitched its soul  
To such discordance, or its utterance,  
Such as he knew it, when compared with the god's  
Was so unmusical. Yet he dare not fail  
The contest, so they waged it to the end,  
While the sweet muses now grown pitiful  
No longer smiled, but turned their heads away  
In sorrow for Marsyas, for his shame  
And for the fate to follow.

So at last  
With one accord the muses rose and looked  
With eyes significant upon Apollo,  
Who angered by the Satyr's swollen pride  
And monstrous failure, had become a will  
Of resolute retribution. But the muses,  
Because they feel for those who trying lose,  
Even as a mother for her crippled son  
Whom the sound-footed distance in the race,

## MARSYAS

Hastened away lest they behold the thing  
That came to pass. And flinging far the flute  
Marsyas shrieked and sank upon the earth.

Whereat Apollo seized his wretched form  
And lifting him up, with strips of laurel bark  
Bound the poor Satyr to a rugged oak  
And flayed him alive, and took the Satyr's skin  
And hung it in a cave, and turned his blood  
To water, whence the river Marsyas  
That from the cave flows onward to this day.

## WORLDS BACK OF WORLDS

This was the world: It was a house  
With a cool hallway end to end  
Where buckets, pans and dippers hung,  
And coats that in the breezes swung;  
And eaves in which 'twas good to browse  
On books stored in a musty box.  
Along the walks were lilac boughs,  
And by the windows hollyhocks.  
And there were fields down to the hills  
Which marked the earth's far boundary;  
A church-spire at the roadway's bend,  
And barns and cribs and twinkling mills,  
And neighbor friends like Mrs. Gray,  
And endless days of dream and play.  
It was a world so guarded, safe,  
So cherished by a God-watched sky  
Seeing the summers come and pass,  
A world so quiet it appeared  
Like to the mimic world ensphered  
By witchery of the old field glass  
Which from an uncle's drawer I took  
Upon the distant hills to look.



## WORLDS BACK OF WORLDS

You know not then that worlds not dead  
Lie back of you and bide their chance  
To seize your world of ignorance :  
There was an opening in the ceiling  
Above the kitchen where the man  
Sat humming to himself at night  
Amid the enshadowed candle-light,  
And played on his accordion  
Happy, unconscious and alone.  
There full of mischief would I lie  
And watch him through the ceiling's hole,  
And laugh for thought of elfish tricks,  
Of whispering words or dropping sticks  
To fright his well contented soul.  
Sometimes I think there is an eye  
Which is not God's that spies upon us ;  
That other worlds may lie about us  
Our fathers or our mothers lived,  
Where Forces lurk and laugh and wait.

Here then was my world's fair estate —  
For so I knew it — could it be  
Disturbed or wrecked ? I never thought  
That change or loss could come to me,  
With God above the church's spire. . . .

But what are all these April dreams ?  
Less tangible the landscape seems ;

## THE GREAT VALLEY

The windmills, barns and houses swim  
In a sphered ether, wheeling, dim.  
Red cattle on green meadows pass  
Across a belt of bluest sky  
Like objects in the old field glass.  
The chickens stalk about the yard  
Like phantom things in my regard  
And songs and cries and voices sound  
Like muffled echoes from the ground.  
Stones and dead sticks crawl and move;  
And bones that through the winter lay  
Something of living power betray.  
I sink in all things dizzily,  
Made one with nature, all I see,  
Until I have no way to prove  
My separate identity.  
Yet death is what? Why, death is this:  
Something that comes but is far off.  
They worry sometimes for my cough.  
I know they watch me, know they cry,  
But what can wreck my earth or sky?

The doctor comes now every day  
And with my father sits and talks,  
Or stands about the garden walks.  
One day I hear them: "It appears  
Sometimes in ten or twenty years  
As madness or paralysis.

## WORLDS BACK OF WORLDS

Sometimes it passes, leaves a scar  
And never troubles one again.  
You say you had this in the war?  
It's hit your boy as phthisis,  
Also I think he's going blind."  
I saw my father trembling wind  
Some plucked grass round and round his hand.  
They noticed me, walked further on  
And left me dreaming where I sat.

Some years since that day now are gone.  
I have no world now, none but night.  
My father's world lay back of mine  
And wrecked my world so guarded, safe,  
So cherished by a God-watched sky  
Which looked on summers rise and pass,  
So like an image caught and held  
By witchery of the old field glass.

## THE PRINCESS' SONG

"Blow, blow, thou wind,  
Blow Conrad's hat away,  
Its rolling do not stay,  
Till I have combed my hair,  
And tied it up behind."

Blow, blow, thou wind,  
Blow Conrad's love away,  
My prince will come to-day.  
Let him but find me fair,  
And searching find.

The queen my mother grieves  
For hopes that went astray.  
Blow thou my grief away,  
Among the April flags,  
Among the dancing leaves.

Fill thou their golden wings,  
And make the great clouds fly  
Like swans across the sky,  
Above the mountain crags  
Where the young eaglet clings.

## THE PRINCESS' SONG

Blow — yet the mad wind dies  
Among the flags and ferns.  
And Conrad still returns,  
Ere I have bound my hair,  
Or dried my eyes.

Blow, blow, thou wind —  
Blow Conrad's love away.  
But since it will not stay,  
Blow thou afar my care  
And make me kind.

As even, lad, thou art.  
Blow, blow, thou wind, but since  
Vainly I wait the prince  
Come, Conrad, loose my hair, —  
Thou loyal heart !



## THE FURIES

### I

But you must act. And therein lies the way  
Of freedom from the Furies. You must burn  
The substance of your being, if you stay  
The impetus of life you will not learn  
The simples of salvation. Go pluck off  
A serpent from Alecto's head and laugh  
Exhilarate with its poison. If you scoff  
You will perceive. You cannot love the staff  
You have not scorned. You cannot weigh the act  
You have not lived, the fear you did not prove.  
Your soul was made to focus and extract  
Through action every hatred, every love.  
Pour out yourself if you would know release  
From what the Furies do to spoil your peace.

### II

Ambition that eludes, love never found  
High hopes that tempt, or goodness still pursued  
Have their own Furies, for this mortal ground  
Breeds serpents from the blood of fortitude  
And action as it does from listless fear.

## THE FURIES

You have aspired and fallen, curse the past  
Till madness come! Be quiet, hide or sear  
The memory of the dream, no less at last  
The Sisters shall arrive! How do they come?  
Your life grows round a moral governance  
And you have served it. You are stricken dumb  
To see it crumble spite of vigilance.  
Now when you cannot think, rebuild, repair  
The Sisters come and wheel your cripple's chair.

### III

You were a fennel stalk that laughed and grew  
With laughter till the life in you could use  
The cells no further, then the cold winds blew,  
And you fell whispering of the April dews.  
Grown fair or foul the rhythmic force was spent,  
The summer gone, your little past achieved,  
Repulsions balanced, though you might lament  
So much neglected, or too much believed.  
You were a dry weed when a Great Hand seized  
And bore you as a carrier of fire.  
The garden you had grown in had not pleased!  
Was this, perhaps, the end of your desire?  
You lit a heap of leaves where children came,  
The Furies meditating watched the flame!

## APOLLO AT PHERÆ

Zeus envied Æsculapius that he healed  
The sick and brought the dead to life, and fain  
Would slay him. So the Cyclops brought Zeus light-  
ning  
With which Zeus smote the healer. Then Apollo  
Destroyed the Cyclops, grieving for his son.  
And Clotho laughed to see the thread of fate  
Slip by Atropos, woven in the cloth  
Of destiny. For had she cut the thread  
Shot from the spindle, then a little trace  
Of scarlet, but no figures of despair  
Had marked the storied tapestry. So Apollo  
Was doomed for punishment to tend the flocks  
Of King Admetus, lord of Pheræ. Next  
Apollo met a mortal woman, daughter  
Of an old soldier, servitor of the gods  
And rich in land.

He, sitting on a rock  
That overlooked a green Thessalian field  
Where grazed the flocks, clad in a leopard's skin,  
His crook beside him, dreamed of wide Olympus:  
"This hour the muses dance, the Council sits  
And there is high debate, or Hera storms

## APOLLO AT PHERÆ

For Zeus' absence ; there is life, and I  
Unknown, alone, a shepherd by this field  
Of pastoral pathos labor all the day."  
And then a step disturbed his revery ;  
And looking up he saw a slender maid  
White as gardenias, jonquil-haired, with eyes  
As blue as Peneus when he meets the sea.  
And an old weakness crept upon the god.  
For ever in his soul there shone the face  
Of woman, like the face of Artemis,  
His virgin sister, delicate and chaste ;  
And to o'ercome such whiteness and reserve  
Had been Apollo's madness from his birth.  
And this Chione, daughter of the soldier,  
Servitor of the gods and rich in land  
At once became his passion. So he rose  
And to Chione spoke, and she, to him.  
And then anon she saw the unkept curls  
Sun-bleached, that touched his shoulders, then his  
breast,  
Smooth as her own, and then his arms, his hands  
His shapely knees, his firm and pointed feet,  
And her eyes closed as stars beneath the dawn  
And dawn rose in her cheeks. And the god knew  
Her inmost thought.

So all that day they played,  
Amid the wind-blown light of Thessaly.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

He wove her traps for crickets from the grass,  
And from the willow branches made her flutes ;  
He caught her butterflies, and sang her runes  
Of living things, and how the earth and sea  
From Erebus and Love sprang into being ;  
And how the sun, and the bright pageant of the stars  
Dance joyously to music. And Chione  
Was dumb for happiness ; and the day went by.  
But with the dusk there came a swooning languor,  
All was forgotten save the shepherd's face  
Held close to hers, and round his moving curls  
The circled splendor of the sickle moon —  
Nor eyes, nor lips, only a golden blur.  
And rousing she beheld the enshadowed field  
Flockless and silent, and the shepherd gone.  
Then through the night Chione weakly walked  
And found at last her home.

The light of day

Brought terror to Chione. Then she sought  
And found Apollo where he sat before  
And told him that her father, the old soldier,  
Was favored of Admetus, and would bring  
The royal power against him, if he failed  
The troth of wedlock. And Apollo mused  
Upon his exile from Olympus' throne,  
And Zeus' wrath against him, that he slew  
The Cyclops, and upon his shepherd state



## APOLLO AT PHERÆ

Tending Admetus' flocks, and how unknown  
And weak he stood between these kingly hands  
Of Zeus and of Admetus. And seeing her fair,  
More fair in tears, he gave her his consent.

Next day Chione brought the god a robe  
And sandals and a girdle. Thus arrayed  
Chione took him to her father's home  
The ancient soldier, servitor of the gods,  
And rich in land, and spoke of him as Acteus  
A merchant from the city. Then the father  
Gave thanks to Zeus and at the family board  
Apollo supped, as one who would become  
Chione's husband. So it came to pass.  
They walked together in the bridal train  
Behind the perfumed torches.

All the while

Zeus smiled to see Apollo's punishment.  
And Hera, who with woman's subtlety,  
Knew that there shone within Apollo's soul  
A face like to the face of Artemis,  
His virgin sister, delicate and chaste,  
And to o'ercome such whiteness and reserve  
Had been Apollo's madness from his birth,  
Laughed freely with the muses as she said:  
"Thus is the masculine spirit ever caught  
By its own lure, let Zeus himself take heed  
Lest sometime he be snared."

## THE GREAT VALLEY

So when Olympus  
Grew dull, the gods for fun looked o'er the ramparts  
And spied upon Apollo at the board  
With all Chione's family ; or at night  
Beside Chione and the little faces  
Which every year increased. Or on Apollo  
About his bitter task of shepherding  
To win the bread for faded Chione  
And for the children.

Thus the nine years passed.  
Then Zeus, avenged, sent all the muses down  
To bring Apollo back, and to Olympus  
Humbled and sorrowful he came again,  
With wrinkles and a touch of whitened hair,  
And a lack-lustre eye, which all the art  
Of Aphrodite after many days  
Could scarce remove.

Then Chione told her father  
That Acteus was not a merchant from the city.  
"Too late," she said, "I found he had deceived me  
And masked his shepherd calling."

To which her father  
The ancient soldier, servitor of the gods  
And rich in land : "Yea, daughter, he deceived you.  
Now he has run away, abandoned you,  
May the gods note it and avenge the wrong."

## STEAM SHOVEL CUT

Steam Shovel Cut lies through a wood,  
And the trestle's at the end.  
And north are the lonely Fillmore Hills,  
And south the river's bend.

It's Christmas day and the blue on the hill  
Is flapped by a flying crow.  
And the steel of the railroad track is cold,  
And the Cut is piled with snow.

What is that there by the trestle's end  
Where the Cut slopes down to the slough?  
That's Cora Williams lying there  
In her cloak of faded blue.

Her skirt is red as a northern spy,  
And her mittens blackberry black.  
And under her cotton underskirt  
There's a green place on her back.

Her little gray hat is over her brow,  
And covers a purple bruise.  
She had white stockings for her feet  
And the holes were in her shoes.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Where did you meet Croak Carless, girl?  
And where did you start to booze?  
They saw you once at Rigdon's place,  
And last at Sandy Hughes'.

On the night that Jesus Christ was born  
You were drinking gin and beer.  
They saw you sitting on Carless' knees  
As the midnight hour drew near.

They saw you two start into the night,  
And the night was cold and black.  
And then they found you there by the bridge  
With the green bruise on your back.

Down through the dark to the Shovel Cut  
The two of you walked and sang.  
You were holding hands on the trestle bridge  
When the bell began to clang.

'Twas back of the curve that the head-light shone  
So what was the use of eyes?  
The mad iron thing leaped on you there  
As you ran on the trestle ties.

It rushed on you like a furious bull  
That charges a scarlet flag.  
The engineer looked long at the gauge  
As the fireman scraped the slag.

## STEAM SHOVEL CUT

Croak Carless jumped and fell on a stone  
And the world to him was a blank.  
But the iron thing struck at your back  
And doubled you down on the bank.

Croak Carless woke from a sleep like death  
And found you covered with blood.  
He slinks to the river to wash his hands,  
He runs to hide in the wood.

He steals through thickets, hides in a barn,  
He cowers where the corn's in shock.  
But the posse catches Croak by noon,  
And the jailer turns the lock.

Croak Carless' wife weeps at the bars,  
Croak weeps in a grated cell.  
They've mortgaged the farm for a lawyer's fee  
To save Croak's soul from hell.

For the Coroner has a bat-like thing  
In a bottle safe in his room.  
It looks like a baby devil fish —  
It's Cora Williams' womb.

A woman's womb is a thing of doom  
And winged with a fan-like mesh.  
And who was the father, they're asking Croak,  
Of this bit of jelly flesh?



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And the doctors took an oath in the court  
That a sharp club did the deed.  
And the judge was a foe of the lawyer man  
Croak Carless paid to plead.

And Croak had talked too much in jail,  
And he trembled and testified  
To a woeful tangle of time and place,  
And the jury thought he lied.

Croak Carless' wife sobbed out in court  
As they twisted him out and in.  
For they made him swear he drank with the girl,  
And swear to his carnal sin.

They stood him up on the gallow's trap  
And his voice was clear and low :  
If I killed Cora Williams, men,  
My soul to hell should go.

They sprang the trap, Croak Carless shot  
Like a wheat bag toward the floor.  
And the doctors let his body hang  
Till his old heart beat no more.

They let him alone to work and sweat  
For a wife's and children's ease.  
But they hung him up for a little beer  
With a woman on his knees.

## STEAM SHOVEL CUT

And he might have died in bed in a year,  
For when they opened him up  
They found his heart was a played out pump,  
And leaked like a rusty cup.

And a man can live as the church decrees,  
Or dance in the way of vice,  
A woman's womb is a thing of doom,  
And life is the current price.

'Tis a vampire bat, or the leather box  
From which you rattle the dice.  
'Tis an altar of doom, is a woman's womb,  
And man is the sacrifice.

## THE HOUSES

You wonder why I bought so many houses,  
Bought and repaired, built over home on house.  
The first one was to make a home for Mary,  
And Frank and Bessie, for I had myself  
A settled home when I was boy and man,  
And knew the feeling of respect, content  
Which comes of one familiar and continued  
Habitation for a boy who's growing.  
The first house, then, was poor enough, God knows!  
A place that smelt in all the rooms of breath  
A sick man breathes into the very paper.  
The rat holes in the base boards had to be  
Stopped up with plaster, all the floors were loose.  
Bricks lay awry upon the chimney tops.  
An old well with a windlass on the porch  
Made one remember typhoid all the time.  
Some apple trees half-rotted, covered over  
With water sprouts stood in a yard of weeds.  
A barn was at the yard's end out of shape  
From leaning at an angle. All in all  
The place was haunted, but it was the best  
I could afford just then, and naturally  
She hated it and grumbled all the time.

## THE HOUSES

A few years past, it seemed scarce two or three,  
And all the children married, went away.  
Just then I grew more prosperous and built over  
The haunted house, and built a handsome barn,  
Cut out the apple trees, destroyed the weeds,  
And put an iron fence around the yard.  
Put bathrooms, running water in the house.  
She jawed at me for doing this, and asked  
Why did you wait until the children left?  
Of course she knew, but blamed me just the same.  
And so we had no pleasure with this house.  
She wanted larger rooms, and trees in front,  
A sunny dining room — there was that porch  
On which ours looked, and though I closed the well  
She often wondered why we had not died  
Before I closed it.

And about this time  
Our banker moved away and left his house  
For sale at public auction. I went down  
Alone, not telling her, to look at it.  
Here was a house upon a stone foundation  
Built of red brick, peaked roof of slate, three stories,  
Brick walks about the yard with plots of flowers,  
A barn of brick — it was the very place!  
There now were grandchildren; and so I dreamed  
How they would romp about this lovely yard,  
Or play on rainy days in that wide garret.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And so I bid and got the house at auction.  
But when I told her she was up in arms :  
The house would hold a family of ten !  
Besides the upper rooms were far too small :  
What is a dining room, or huge drawing room  
If you step out of bed against the wall ?  
Then there's that gully just below the barn  
Breeding malaria, the banker's family  
Were sick year in and out — that's why they sold it  
For anything at public sale. O fool !  
Well, Mary came that summer with her children,  
And my poor dream in part was realized.  
But Frank and Bessie moved to California  
And never saw the happiness I planned  
For them and for their children. Mary's husband  
Disliked the house — his hatred was beginning.  
Next summer Mary left him and divorced him,  
And started out to earn her children's bread.  
She didn't come again.

And so it was true,  
We didn't need so large a house — we sold it  
And bought a cottage of six rooms ; this time  
She joined with me in picking out the house,  
But that was nothing, for no other house  
Besides this one was up for sale just then.  
No sooner had we moved than she was full  
Of wounded memory and a mad regret :



## THE HOUSES

She saw what she had lost. These little rooms!  
This front fence almost jammed against the door!  
And stoves again instead of radiators!  
No running water, only an old pump  
Above the kitchen sink! And near the station —  
The bawling bussmen bothered her at night!  
The midnight train woke her unfailingly.  
And now she said our first house was all right  
With this, or that corrected. We had blundered  
In ever selling it and taking on  
Such luxury in the brick house. It had spoiled  
Her taste for living in a house like this,  
With just a little yard, that hideous fence,  
Which one could touch while standing in the door!  
She said she could not breathe because of it,  
And railed against her fate so that it brought  
The next step in my life of buying houses. . . .

Dreams entered in my brain of fields and woods,  
A little lake perhaps, river or stream.  
There was a fad of buying farms just then.  
I went to Michigan on other business,  
And there I saw one, bought it on the spot.  
You see I had the passion as of drink,  
And knew it as I ventured once again.  
But then there was the house upon the bluff!  
And there below it was the river! there  
Beeches and oaks down to the river's edge!

## THE GREAT VALLEY

A great white house all new, and apple trees,  
A vineyard and a field of eighty acres.  
Here will I sit, I said, upon my bluff  
And watch the river. I will keep a man  
To farm the place, and prune the vines and trees,  
This is the place at last. But then I thought  
What will she say? She wants a farm I know,  
But will this suit her? So I sent for her.  
And when she came she kissed me, she was glad,  
Commended my good judgment, loved the house,  
Went through the barn in rapture, stood beneath  
The windmill, which was near, to watch it pump.  
Strolled down the wooded bluff, threw pebbles in  
The river where the swallows dipped and flew,  
And gathered daisies by the river's shore.  
I sat down in the grass flushed through with joy,  
Like one who finds his haven, who has solved  
Laborious troubles, thinking of the rest  
I should take here — a man to run the place,  
And months of summer recreation here!  
I told her what my plan was.

No, she said,  
To own a farm is business. You should know  
By this time that you have no head for business.  
I think you've shown some wisdom in this farm,  
Or better you've had luck in buying it.  
Your other ventures buying houses were

## THE HOUSES

Enough to make you have distrust of self.  
Now that you've bought the farm to make it pay  
Is what we have in hand, and you must work.  
We'll keep a man, but he cannot do all  
There is to do here, I will work and you  
Must work as well, the farm must pay, you know.  
I want the man to live with us in the house  
So I can watch him, rout him out to work  
At sun-up and keep watch upon his time.

We'll keep two rooms for our use. For the man  
Must have a family, these single fellows  
Are off too much at night and think too much  
In working hours of what they'll do at night.

Perhaps I am a weakling with my dream  
Of buying houses, for I dream of joys  
And build my palaces, invite my joys  
To enter and be glad. They never come!  
She took the farm and ran it. It was business,  
But business in disorder with a loss  
For seed which did not sprout, and stock that died,  
And glutted markets when the fruit was good.  
I worked awhile, I fished once in the river,  
I sat a few times on my wooded bluff —  
And then I fled and left her to the farm  
To rule a single farmer who cut weeds,  
Abandoned weeds for plowing, left the plow

## THE GREAT VALLEY

To make a flower bed, following her whims  
Obedient, indifferent to results. . . .

If you destroy a bird's nest that's the end.  
The nesting birds return to find the branch  
Where they had builded with such patient care,  
All naked of their work. They look and fly  
And think of what? But build no more that year.  
But if you take a twig and scratch the grains  
About the ant hill, overturn their work,  
Stop up the door, the little folk begin  
To build again, clear out the ruined hall —  
They cannot be discouraged like the birds.  
I think I am an ant — for even yet  
I'm looking for a house, or better a home.  
There is that house walled in with earth — that's  
sure —  
But if there is no house to fill my joy  
Why have I looked for houses all my life?

## THE CHURCH AND THE HOTEL

Over the dead lake  
And in a dusty sky  
The full moon is speared by the spire of the Baptist  
church ;  
Or now it hangs over the Groveland Hotel :  
I do not know whether it is over the spire  
Or over the hotel.

In a dusty sky the moon  
Is the bottom of a copper kettle  
Which cannot be scoured into brightness.  
The sky is a faded mosquito net  
Over a brass cylinder cap  
Dulled with verdigris.

Some years ago,  
Not many years ago,  
The Rev. Albert McDugall, D.D.  
At the pulpit under this spire  
With habitual regularity  
Used to say :  
Let us pray.  
And the Rev. Albert McDugall, D.D.



## THE GREAT VALLEY

With habitual regularity  
Used to preach  
On the wages of sin.  
And on Sunday evenings  
As he was saying let us pray,  
Ed Breen in Henry Hughes' buffet,  
There in the Groveland Hotel  
Sitting with cronies at a table would say :  
"Another round, Henry,  
Bourbon for me."

And at 7:30,  
At the very moment  
When the Rev. Albert McDugall, D.D.  
Was saying let us pray,  
Ed Breen would be beginning the night,  
And would be saying to Henry Hughes :  
"Another round, Henry,  
Bourbon for me."

You, Rev. Albert McDugall, D.D.  
Lived to a ripe age.  
You lived to marry a second wife.  
And you, Ed Breen, died in the thirties.  
But whether it be better to have ptomaine poisoning  
From eating cold chicken,  
Or to drug yourself to death with bourbon  
I will ask the moon.

## THE CHURCH AND THE HOTEL

For there is the moon  
Like a German silver watch  
Under a grimy show case.  
I think it hangs as much over the hotel  
As over the church.

## SUSIE

Where did you go, pale Susie, after the day  
You left the service of the boarding house?  
The night before we made carouse  
And danced the time away.

We boys were in the kitchen and were drinking  
Small beer — you slapped the hands of us  
Who stroked your arms half amorous —  
Where did you go, I'm thinking?

Medical students up at Hahnemann  
Hunt women on a Saturday night.  
And sing, tell tales, and verse recite,  
And rush the forbidden can.

The paltry mistress made you pay for all  
The fault of us, and packed you out of doors  
When you had scrubbed the floors,  
And swept the entrance hall.

I watched you in your faded cloak and hat  
With canvas bag walk towards the Grove.  
Then something in my fancy hove,  
Laughing I caught you at

## SUSIE

The doorway of the hotel on the street  
Where I had tracked you round from thirty-first.  
You laughed and cried and called me worst  
Of devils on two feet.

There I had followed you and seized you when  
You did not care what happened, so  
You fell into my hands, you know —  
'Tis twenty years since then.

I never saw you after that, nor heard  
In all this city aught of you.  
You vanished like a blot of dew,  
Or ashen hued seed bird.

I wonder if you wed a red bull-throat  
Who ran a rivet hammer, drove a truck,  
Bore many children or worse luck  
Went where the drift weeds float. . . .

## HAVING HIS WAY

We parted at the Union Station,  
Tom Hall and I,  
Two boys in the early twenties  
Fresh from the quiet of fields,  
And the sleepy silence of village life.  
And we stepped into Adams Street,  
Noisy from trucks and rattling cars,  
And babbling multitudes.  
He with his great invention,  
And I with my translation of Homer,  
And the books of Rousseau and Marx.

And he went his way  
To sell his great invention.  
And I in the village glory  
Of clothes ill-fitting, timid, sensitive  
And proud, a little learned, so zealous  
For the weal of the world  
Came to your chateau palace near the Drive,  
To you my friend, my queenly cousin,  
For a little visit before I entered  
Upon the city's life.



## HAVING HIS WAY

You looked me over with calm Egyptian eyes,  
And put me at ease with your lovely smile.  
And there was about you the calm of desert air in  
Nevada

That made me forget myself.  
Yet you began to guide me with subtlest words,  
And to mould me with delicate hands,  
As one might smooth a rumpled collar,  
Or fasten a loosened scarf,  
Or lift to place a strand of hair  
Of one beloved who thrills to the touch.  
Even with closed eyes you saw everything  
Of harmony, or form, or hue.  
There were silver strings in your little ears  
Which caught the tone pictures of sounds,  
And the intonations and sonorities of voices;  
Which trembled to the barbarities of unmelodic words.  
And there as you saw and heard me,  
(I knew it at once,)  
You took me for your piece of bronze in the rough  
To be made under your hands  
Your triumph, your work, your creation  
In the world where you ruled as queen.  
You would see me as finished art  
Move before admiring eyes  
Where music is and richness,  
And where poverty and struggle  
And sacrifice and failure are forgotten.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

That was the cousin you meant me to be.  
And in a few nights  
There was an evening dress and fine linen  
And an opera hat and cloak  
Laid out for me in my snow white room,  
And a valet came to help me.  
For we were to see Carmen together —  
You and I in a box.  
You the queen,  
And I a genius from the country  
Of whom the word had gone the rounds :  
A translator of Homer,  
And a dreamer of revolutions,  
Her cousin, you know !

I was pale from fear and pride  
As I entered the box with you.  
I felt I was wronging my dreams  
And apostatizing all I had dreamed  
To be in this box with you.  
And a sullen hatred of everything :  
The mass of color, the faint perfumes,  
The lights, the jewels, the dazzling breasts  
Of the queens in the boxes angered me.  
And everyone was smiling, and everyone was leveling  
Opera glasses, sometimes at me,  
A translator of Homer  
And a dreamer of socialism.

## HAVING HIS WAY

And there like a fool I sat and thought  
Of the cold without and the beggar man  
Who stood at your carriage as we alighted.

And when the music arose at last  
A sort of madness whirled in my brain.  
For what was this Carmen thing  
But subtle wickedness and cruel lust  
And hardest heathenism,  
And delight that seeks its own,  
In a setting of bloody voluptuousness,  
Fiendish caprice and faithlessness,  
In music through which a pagan soul  
Had sensed and voiced it all?  
Till at least (I almost shrieked at this)  
Don Jose in his amorous madness  
Plunged a knife in the back of the whore he loved  
To the growl of horns and moan of viols. . . .

And you sat through it all  
Like a firefly on a vine leaf  
Suspiring in all your body,  
And gazing with calm Egyptian eyes,  
Or turning to me as if you would know  
If the poison was in my blood. . . .  
But I was immune:  
Democracy seemed too glorious,  
And the cause of the poor too just,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And fair sweet love of men and women  
So worth the cost to gain and keep,  
And honest bread too sweet —  
I was immune. . . .  
And I scarcely saw the fair slim girl  
To whom you introduced me.  
And I scarcely heard what you said in the carriage  
About her countless riches.  
And I scarcely heard your words of praise  
That I looked like a prince,  
And that you meant to help me,  
And do by me what your husband would do  
If he were living,  
And lift me along to a place in life  
Where power and riches are,  
And beauty is and music,  
And where struggle and sacrifice are forgotten.

And when I did not answer you thought  
I sat abashed by your side.  
Instead in my mind were running  
The notes to Queen Mab,  
And bits of Greek.  
I did this to stifle my wrath,  
And to forget the cage you were luring me into,  
And the poison you were offering me,  
And the cause of Truth!  
And hiding my wrath in a day or two

## HAVING HIS WAY

I left you saying I would return,  
But I never returned.

Instead I went where the youths were thinking,  
Painting and writing,  
And talking of the revolution,  
And the glorious day to come.  
And I was happy even though  
They sent my great translation back  
As poor and amateurish.  
For the years of youth were long ahead  
There was time to try again. . . .

Then Margaret's stepmother  
Drove her from home, and she came to the city  
Crying in her loneliness and destitution,  
Suffering from her lame hip.  
And even these were happy days,  
For I loved her for her sorrows,  
I loved her for her lameness.  
It was all transfigured through my love  
For democracy and sacrifice,  
And the sweetness of honest bread.  
And it was like taking the sacrament, our marriage.  
And there in our little flat far out  
On Robey Street I toiled at writing  
While she went about so lame,  
Trying to keep the house for me,



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And to clear away the disorders  
Which piled about her constantly  
And were never cleared away. . . .

And is it not strange that to-day,  
After the lapse of ten years  
These two things happen within an hour?  
Your letter from Rome arrived —  
For though I scorned your life and love,  
And went my way,  
You write me still it seems,  
Not to wound my fallen state,  
Nor to show me what my life had been  
If I had heeded you.  
But just in the continuous sunshine  
Of noble friendship to show me  
I am sometimes in your thought.  
And scarcely had your letter come  
When Tom Hall crept up the creaking stairs  
Dragging his feet with the help of a cane —  
He is rich and came to help me.  
And Tom Hall had his way as well:  
He hated marriage and went the rounds,  
Wherever a pretty face allured.  
And now he is sick and dragging his feet.  
And here am I at a writing desk:  
I'm cap and bells for the Daily Globe  
And my grind is a column a day.

## HAVING HIS WAY

You see it comes to this, dear queen :  
Can a man or woman alive escape  
The granite's edges or ditch's mire,  
The thorny thickets or marsh's gas,  
Or the traps one thinks would never be set  
Except for the fox or wolf? . . .  
And here is Margaret down with a cough  
Never to rise from her bed again.  
And I sit by at my task of jokes,  
And I stop to read your letter again,  
And wonder why life has never caught you,  
And why you are laughing there in Rome  
Where you dine with happy friends;  
Or tramp the thickets around the ruins  
Of the Baths of Caracalla —  
I see the platforms and dizzy arches  
Under a sky of Italy.  
It's cloudy here and the elevated  
Rattles and roars beneath my window.  
You're picking flowers while it's winter here.  
I read these things in your letter and wonder  
Is the asp at your breast in spite of laughter?  
Or when is the asp to sting you?

## THE ASP

As the train rushed on  
The days of our youth swept through me,  
As if they were brought to life by a sort of friction.  
I thought of how madly you laughed  
When we played at blindman's buff with the Miller  
girls;  
And of the May baskets we made together,  
And hung as we rang the bell and ran.  
And of our games in the first spring days  
When we stole from house to house.  
And the children were shouting  
And the April moon was new.  
And the smell of burning leaves  
And the first tulips filled us with such ecstasy.  
We laughed, we shouted, we leaped for joy.  
We ran like mad through the rooms,  
And we went to bed at last  
Laughing and gasping,  
And lay looking at the moon through the leafless  
boughs,  
And fell to sleep with joyous hearts,  
Thinking of to-morrow,  
And the days and days to come for play,  
And the summer to come,

## THE ASP

And all the mad raptures of school at an end,  
And no death, and no end  
Of the love of father and mother,  
And the home we loved.

And here it was spring again —  
But such a spring!  
At the end of such years and years  
And births and births and spheres and spheres of life,  
Each like a life or a world of its own  
With its friends, its own completeness, its rounded end.  
And back of them all  
Our old home forgotten,  
Our father and mother gone,  
And back of this spring that ended world of ours  
Wherein we parted  
Grown misty too!  
And as the train rushed on  
And the hour of meeting you neared  
I was thrilled with gladness, thrilled with fear.  
And now the station was Herkimer,  
And now it was Amsterdam,  
And now it was Albany,  
And then Poughkeepsie on the Hudson.  
And I looked from the car to the passing scene,  
And back to the car again.  
Or I turned in my seat  
Or took up my book and laid it down,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Or fastened my bag for the hundredth time,  
Or straightened my cloak on the seat,  
And waited and waited.  
For I had a story to tell you  
That I could not wait to tell.  
I was traveling a thousand miles to tell you,  
And to get your advice, to have your solace,  
To look in your eyes again,  
And to feel in spite of springs that were gone,  
And our old home, and father and mother gone  
There was an arm in the world for me to lean on.

And the train rushed on  
Bringing me nearer to you.  
And the tears welled up to my eyes  
As I wondered why life had mangled me so :  
Why the man I loved at first and hated afterward  
Had died that tragic death,  
Leaving me with memories of that love,  
And such agony for that hate.  
And why as a sort of Empress Eugenia  
The world turned on me when I fell,  
And the little power I had departed.  
And why in spite of my aspiration  
I had run into such disgust,  
Such overthrow of my work,  
Such undoing of myself,  
Such spiritual wreck and shame !



## THE ASP

And to think of what had done it :  
My search for love, my struggle for excellence —  
These things alone !

I had married this second man for love,  
And because I believed in him  
As a man of power, a man of thought,  
A man who loved me.

And hoping through him to retrieve my life  
From the smut of the man I married first.

But I found my very soul deceived :

He was just a violent visionary,

A frothing fool,

A spendthrift, coward, hedonist.

And there I was tied to him.

And carrying his child while finding him out.

So I used to stand with my face to the wall

And choke my mouth with a handkerchief

To keep from crying out.

For I knew if a whimper passed my lips

I should fall and roll on the floor with madness,

And beat my head on the floor.

So when the train rolled into the station

A sickness, a weakness came over me.

I had spent myself in expectation.

And now that I was about to see you,

The thought of the vainness of seeing you,

And the thought that you could not help me,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Though I had traveled these thousand miles,  
Made me wish to fly, to hide.  
So I stepped from the train in a kind of daze,  
And scarcely felt your kiss.  
It seemed relaxed, so faint.  
And your voice was weak.  
And your eyes were dim and dry.

And there in the cab as we drove to the Park  
I was still in a daze  
Talking of May baskets  
And blindman's buff,  
And laughing, for one always laughs  
When the moment is worst.  
And so it was I did not really see you.  
But when we began to walk  
Things about you began to limn themselves :  
Your shoulders seemed a little bent.  
There were streaks of snow on your temples.  
And you were quiet with the terrible quietness  
Of understanding of life.  
And the old wit I knew,  
And the glad defiance of fate,  
And the light in your eyes,  
And the musical laugh  
All were gone.  
Perhaps the daily grind of Cap and Bells  
Had sapped you, dear.

## THE ASP

But when I looked at your hand on your cane  
And saw how white and slim it was,  
And how it trembled, I knew  
You were not the giant man of old,  
Though you said you were gaining strength again,  
And I could lean on your arm.

Well, then I told you all :  
How my search for love had fooled me again ;  
And how this beast had wronged and robbed me ;  
And how he stood in his paranoiac rages,  
And compared himself to Christ.  
But when I began to speak of the child,  
What a darling girl she was,  
You sank in a seat and said : "No more —  
I didn't think I was weak as this —  
You mustn't tell me another thing,  
Not now, not just now."  
Then I saw, what Time had done,  
And I saw that you could not help me.  
And the next day and the next day,  
When I did not see you,  
And weeks passed by and I scarcely saw you,  
And I scarcely saw you again,  
Though I had come a thousand miles  
To lean on your arm,  
It grew in my mind that you despised me,  
Or that you were indifferent to my lot,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Or at least that I was a wounded thing  
You could not bear to see.  
Till at last, though I knew  
That my way was clear : there was nothing to do  
But to fly with my child,  
And leave him forever,  
And endure great loneliness forever, if need be,  
And whatever shame there was,  
For the sake of my soul's honor,  
Which only myself could save,  
And you could save not at all.  
Though I knew, I say, that my way was clear,  
And I needed your help not at all,  
Still in a kind of madness  
I began to reproach you for not helping me,  
And for abandoning me to my fate.  
As a sick child will cry and blame its mother  
When it is not healed at once.

And that was the mood he found me in  
When he came with a smile and honey words.  
Well, I fell in his arms, and here I am  
Plunged up to the mouth in spiritual muck,  
And what life is left for me now ?  
How can I go on with life ?  
For he hates me now as a humbled thing,  
He has broken my pride and he hates me now.  
And he roars and curses about the house,

## THE ASP

And yells at our little girl when she cries,  
And stands with his hands outstretched and says  
That his fate is worse than Christ's.  
And I tremble and rustle around like a fallen leaf,  
And neither laugh nor cry nor return him a word. . . .

For you know there's a spring,  
And you know there's a fire,  
To burn dead leaves.  
And after the ashes  
There's a spirit given a chance!



## THE FAMILY

We were three larks in the same nest.  
All spring the wind blew from the west.  
We chirped beneath the enshadowing wheat,  
It grew to green, it grew to gold.  
Our mother's voice was piercing sweet  
To see how strong we were and bold —  
How palpitant of wing.

We knew our father not, alas !  
A hunter slew him while the grass  
Was fresh beneath the April rain.  
And ere I had the strength to fly  
Our brother sang a farewell strain  
And soared into the empty sky.  
And then our sister knew the fear  
And hunger of a serpent's eye.  
And our sweet mother, lone and drear,  
Fled far afield and left me here  
To nurse my heart and sing.

## THE SUBWAY

There was the white face of Fear,  
And the solemn face of Duty,  
And the face of self looking in the mirror.  
But there were voices calling from vernal hilltops,  
And silver spirits by moonlit gardens calling,  
And voices of no sound from far horizons calling,  
But even if there be penitence for living  
And thought and tears for the past  
And even shame and even hunger ;  
And if there be nothing gained at the last in living,  
And much to pay for the madness of briefest bliss ;  
And if there be nothing in life, and life be nothing  
So that to nail one's self to the cross is nothing lost —  
Is Death not even less ?

These were the voices whereto we tore our flower  
Petal by petal apart and scattered it,  
And paused and paltered.

But lest the whispers grow louder,  
And the eyebrows arch to a fiercer scorn,  
You fled away to France and left me  
With only a poor half uttered farewell,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

A scrawl put off to the last, then written  
As with shut eyes, swift nervous hands :  
As one might wait for the heroic thought  
To take his poison — wait in vain, and then  
Cowardly gulp it down and reel to death.  
I could not hate you for the pain of hate,  
And could not love you who had hid yourself,  
Belied yourself behind this scrawl.  
I could only sit half-numb,  
And drift in thought.

And afterwards it wasn't so much to be alone,  
Nor to dream of the days that were done,  
Save as it deepened the surge in my heart,  
Or strengthened the ebb of my soul for thought  
Of your soul drawn away from me,  
So needlessly drawn it seemed.  
And it's the music that deepens and changes, —  
For as your soul adds strings to its strings  
There are fingers to play — it almost seems  
There are fingers about us that watch and wait  
For a soul that's adding strings to its harp  
To play them when they're strung.  
And so it's the music that deepens and changes  
That kills you at last I think.

Well, I had a dream one night  
That a dead man well could dream :

## THE SUBWAY

They had buried me in Rosehill.  
And after twenty years from France they brought you  
And put you just across the walk from me  
Where we slept while the crowding city grew  
To a vast six millions, and they were building  
A subway to Lake Forest.  
And we were forgotten of everyone,  
And almost our family names were lost.  
And our love you fled from all forgotten,  
And everything we said, or thought, or felt forgotten  
With the whispers of boys and girls  
In a temple's shadow in Babylon.

Well, to pursue, it's a day in March  
When the colors are brilliantly white and blue;  
And it's cold except for Poles and Italians  
Who dig with spades and cut with picks.  
And some of these fellows are digging us up,  
We lie in the way of the subway, you know.  
And they dump our bones in a careless heap,  
The ribs of me by the ribs of you,  
My skull lies ignorant by your skull.  
And behold our poor arms are entwined.  
For death you know is a mocker of Life.  
And there we lie like stocks and stones,  
And where is our love and where is your fear?  
And a young Pole pushes our bones together  
With a lusty shove of his heavy shoe,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And he says to another : " You saw that girl  
I was dancing with last night ?  
Well, I don't think I'm the only one.  
And besides she bothers me most to death.  
And as soon as this subway job is over,  
Which will be in a year, or year and a half,  
I'm going to beat it back to Poland."  
Then the other beginning to shovel muttered :  
" 1976."



## THE RADICAL'S MESSAGE

To the archangels and the fiery seed  
Of mad Prometheus, fighting gods for men,  
And heaven for earth, this greeting :  
I led you once, I taught you, am the sire  
Of hosts of you, but fellow to you all.  
And when I fell, was chained upon this bed  
By adamantine sickness, then I lay  
And had you in my thought hour after hour,  
Day after day, and saw you in dreams by night  
Still fighting, bleeding, caring for the fallen,  
Or objurgating heaven for the curse  
It sheds on men, or arming for the fray  
With steel of resisting thought; and so the sense  
Of my responsibility has weighed  
Upon me as my night has deftly dawned  
To something clearer than the soul you knew,  
Who led you once, with breath of iron horns,  
Called to you : Charge ! there is the trench of greed !  
Avenge the poor ! bring justice ! purge the state  
Of fraud ! And so I lay and thought of you  
Still guarding the old lines, fighting the old fights,  
While I was changed, was not your leader now,  
Cared no more for your battles, save as strife

## THE GREAT VALLEY

That leads up higher, for upon my wall  
I woke to see these words : He only wins  
His freedom and existence who each day  
Conquers them newly. How can I tell you  
What has come over me ?

You walk through galleries,  
Devour the pictures in the different rooms,  
Then gaze about you where you stand at last  
Amid supernal canvases of light.  
Try to recall the pictures you have studied,  
What you have seen has helped you to perceive  
The final beauties, but is blurred in mind,  
It has been lived, has lost its vital power,  
Is not the sovereign moment.

Climb a mountain  
The whole day through, and at the time of stars  
Stand on a peak and search infinity !  
You have forgot the valleys, save perhaps  
The torment of the flies of which you're freed  
In these cool heights.

So age cannot recall  
The thrill and intimate complexities  
That made the thought of youth. A sickness comes :  
One has been metamorphosed, cannot live  
The old emotions, habits, old delights.

## THE RADICAL'S MESSAGE

And as for that we change each day and all  
Our yesterdays are chrysalises whence  
We crawled to what we are. In short, archangels,  
I have become another soul. Now listen :

I have seen things I cannot tell you of.  
I have gained understandings past my power  
To give you clearly ; yet upon me rests  
The teasing call to tell you, here I lie  
Revolving this new task of leadership.  
How shall I make you see I have not failed you ?  
Not really played a treasonous soul to you ?  
Not scorned the cause I gave you, kept you in ?  
Or damned you for, or made you suffer for ?  
I railed at heaven, I instructed you  
To rail as well. How can you understand  
I now accept the fate ? Will you despise me  
For saying this ? Or will you say disease  
Has weakened me, cooled off the fire of soul  
And damped my courage ? Then go on your way  
To find a worthier leader ?

So to doubt  
I taught you once, but now my mind believes.  
And to deny the order of the world  
I gave you words, now I affirm the plan.  
To fight against the gods in man's behalf,  
I made my leadership. Now I perceive

## THE GREAT VALLEY

The cause of gods and men made one. You see  
It is not individual gain that counts  
In these external benefits of freedom  
And satisfaction of material wants,  
That counts so much, I say, as inner chains  
Struck from the wrists, and inner scales peeled off  
From inner eyes. I grant the human cause,  
And say this, — Can I make you understand?  
To give you proof my heart is with you yet  
Let me reveal my sacrifice.

### Suppose

You've found a truth that others knew before you,  
Seen, let us say, the cat, as single taxers  
Are wont to say? You hunt up some adherent  
Who's labored with you, tell him, "I'm convinced,  
I see the cat at last." You want to share  
Your joy with some one, want his dragging hope  
To hear you have arrived. And so with me  
I hungered to communicate my vision  
To some one who had seen it, and who knew  
Its meaning, what it meant to me.

### But then

You archangels and hot Promethean seed  
Each time I thought of making the confession  
To some delighted spirit, ranged yourselves  
In thought around my sick bed, with contempt,

## THE RADICAL'S MESSAGE

Or pained compassion written on your brows,  
And words like these: He has deserted us,  
He has surrendered, cringed before the gods.  
And so my sacrifice is this: You'll be  
The first to know my second birth, you can  
In such case never charge it up to fear,  
Or weakness, shrunken nerves, or spirit  
That lost the human touch through the effects  
Of some delirium. What mind so clear,  
Or will so strong to die with this denial  
For your sakes? For it may be best for you  
To live the rebel out of you. And if  
You thought — at least I fear it — if you thought  
I had gone over to the hosts you hate,  
As you are now, through weakness, made my peace  
With heaven, as you'd call it, just to save  
My wretched self, you'd have a mad regret,  
A fine disgust to work through, added labor  
To all you must achieve. That's why I die,  
And seal this message. Break it on the day  
They make me ashes!



## BOMBYX

Sealed in a cocoon-cradle of white silk,  
Locked fast in sleep ;  
Or bound for years as a chrysalid, while the neap  
Creative tides rise to the spring and slough  
The torn strands and the golden pupa stuff,  
You tear wings free for the connubial flight —  
Break suddenly the embryo trance, drift off,  
Whole troops of you in a looped and colorful clutter  
Wobbling like leaves in a fresh wind's delight.  
And over clover meadows in a flutter,  
Or through sweet scented hollows,  
You seek the expectant mate,  
And the mad moment where life turns to death,  
And both become one essence and one breath,  
One undivided fate.

Together you fly  
Drunken with life, yet mad to die,  
Since soul achievement is death after all,  
All rivals for the wedding festival.  
Yet only one of you can win the prize ;  
The rest shall sink exhausted in defeat,  
While the triumphant bridegroom dies  
In his own rapture and creative fire —  
All perish in the flame of their desire.

## BOMBYX

For none of you is given strength to live  
Beyond the quest, or the hymeneal kiss;  
The disappointed perish  
One wins his joy, but may not keep or cherish  
The moment which contains it, sudden doom  
Falls on the winner of his bliss  
And on the wings that quiver their frustration.

Bombyx! to have more life than is enough  
To win the mate, achieve the one success,  
And on that life to mount and half survey  
The universe —  
Build cities with it, letter precious scrolls,  
Plan for the race to be and have the vision  
To labor for of ages half elysian,  
Is that a benediction or a curse?  
Is it a good or evil to have strength  
To soar beyond the sun, or planets even  
If none of us at length  
Reach heaven?  
If none of our infatuate souls  
Sip the bright fire of God?  
If it be all a flying in a dream,  
A lying down at last in deeper night,  
To enrich the prodigal sod,  
To breed new wings  
For the same flight?

## THE APOLOGY OF DEMETRIUS

Hyacinthus, your money, the idol you ordered is finished.

May the grace of Diana be with you in strength undiminished.

Behold how the breast of it glitters, as if it were wrought in with stipples.

The Ephesian goddess is nature and these are her bountiful nipples.

So then do I fear for my trade? No, never! It's past my conceiving.

There'll be work for the artist while gods change to win our believing.

Come on then, you babblers and madmen from Jewry and tell us and show us —

Yes, come with your tumult the like of which never was known in Corinth or Troas.

They crowd in the markets and temples and gabble a story that palters.

Well, I whistle and hammer the silver, a maker of statues and altars.

## THE APOLOGY OF DEMETRIUS

Who says I am wroth lest in Samothrace, Lystra and  
Delos

The craft of the maker of images fail through the  
speech of these fellows?

And the temple of Artemis perish? Oh, well, however  
they hate us

Can they burn it as once it was burned by the wretch  
Herostratus?

But we built it again and carved it all newly in beauty  
and wonder —

Destroy it, oh man, who was crazed by lightning and  
roaring of thunder!

Oh virgin Diana, if virgin, what virgin whose altar is  
older!

If matron what breasts hang with milk for the eyes of  
her temples' beholder!

For centuries gone — when these Jews prayed to ser-  
pents of bronze and calves that were golden

In Ephesus, Arcady, Athens, our reverent love was  
beholden

To the goddess of prophecy, music, the lyre, of light,  
· inspiration,

Who guarded and watches the city and lays the foun-  
dation

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Of nations and laws. What works we have done, yea  
still we would heed her —  
And look at your barbarous ark in your temple of jewels  
and cedar!

What is our pollution, our idols, our sacrificed things  
which are strangled?

I ask you already divided in turbulent parties who  
wrangled

Concerning salvation of God to the faith of the uncir-  
cumcision

In Cyprus and Paphos, where poets of love keep the  
Hellenic vision.

I am filled with my loathing! Oh keep me a Greek  
though you make me a whoreson,

When the worship of beauty is dead you may pare off  
my foreskin.

When the symbol is dead which I mould to Diana our  
goddess

I'll retire to the country of Nod, no matter where Nod  
is.

It will live when your temples are built, if any are  
buidled,

And Jesus in silver is nailed on a cross which is gilded.



## THE APOLOGY OF DEMETRIUS

And touching this thing is it different to worship a  
man or abstraction ?

Or an idol of silver or stone ? — go talk to your spirit's  
distraction !

Areopagus listened to Paul, I am told, for Athens is  
spending

Her time, as of old, in weighing new things and at-  
tending.

They heard him in silence ! Let his arguments pass  
uncorrected —

Why, Plato had told us of Er from the dead resur-  
rected !

Now, mark me ! For showing the wisdom, compas-  
sion of poets and sages

That silence like lightning will aureole Paul to the end  
of the ages.

Oh Athens, who set up that shrine, do you think it was  
just superstition

Which carved for all passers to see that profoundest  
inscription :

To the unknown God ? Do you think it was cowardice  
even ?

Make altars and gods as you will, unknown is the  
planeted heaven.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And we who are richest in gods — have exhausted all  
thought in creating  
Both symbols and shapes for interpreted loving and  
hating

Still sense the Unknown, though in blindness, in love  
as in duty  
Would worship it most — the Unknown is the ultimate  
beauty.

Yes, Athens who set up the altar and chiseled the wor-  
shipful letters  
To the Unknown God — what ignorance fastened with  
fettters

Did you loosen, oh wonder of Tarsus, how help their  
unknowing  
Who told them he dwelt not in temples, nor needed  
the flowing

Of prayers from men's hearts — the Giver of life and  
of all things, and seeing  
He is lord of the heavens, in whom we are living and  
having our being.

So quoting our poet who centuries since with the mon-  
arch Gonatas  
Lived and wrote the Phaenomena, known to the  
Greeks as Aratus.

## THE APOLOGY OF DEMETRIUS

And yet Hyacinthus I pity this Paul for profoundest  
compassion  
Of Jesus before him. This sky and this earth I can  
fashion

Through mystical wonder or fear to the Sphinx or the  
Minotaur dreaded.  
There's Persephone dying and rising, and Cerberus the  
dog many-headed.

We have thought it all through! Yet I say if a virtue  
Elysian  
Resides in the doctrine I'll leave off the goddess  
Ephesian;

Sell my tools, shut my shop, worship God in a way  
that is safer,  
Make the Unknown the known! Have they shown  
you a magical wafer?

## A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

### *Act One*

There was slight rain that afternoon,  
And tempest in the apple trees ;  
But as the sun went down the moon  
Sailed swiftly to a western breeze.

Day kindled something in your blood,  
Your fancies roved with dove and hawk ;  
There was no promise in your mood  
Nor soft assurance in your talk.

I felt you might mislead my trust  
And slight a love too surely yours ;  
You were so wild, I felt you must  
Be kindred to the woods and moors.

But when we passed the orchard through  
The dusk had crept into the sky ;  
Your eyes betrayed a dream which grew  
Until I thought I heard you sigh.

You were an ardent star that waited  
For night to be yourself and show

## A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

How surely afternoon had fated  
A love that nothing could forego.

### *Act Two*

The sky was full of clouds at rest  
Like dolphins in a waste of blue.  
We tramped along a country road  
Into the village, I and you.

The dogwood bloomed along the fences.  
We heard the songs of larks and thrushes.  
The country door-yards teemed with hues  
Of lilac trees and almond bushes.

The long blaze of the setting sun  
Shone in your eyes and analyzed  
Their little rifts of gray and brown,  
And left your secret undisguised.

And I was silent thinking over  
The old threads raveled from your heart.  
I hear you clearer now than then :  
“How can we part ? How can we part ?”

### *Act Three*

Shadows upon the wall  
And the ghost of a past on the floor,  
Here where the hours made carnival  
In the days that are no more.



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And the chamber is cold and bare,  
And the wax from the taper drips;  
But I bury my face in your hair,  
And swoon at the touch of your lips.

We went from the house to the wood,  
But never a word we spoke;  
And an eerie wind like our mood  
Rustled the leaves of the oak.

Dead leaves, tremulous, crisp,  
That breathed a forgotten tune;  
A cloud the shape of a wisp  
Blotted the soaring moon.

Silent we walked the path,  
And then the wild farewell;  
I saw your form like a wraith  
Fade in the forest's dell.

If joy would never depart,  
If we could but still the pain —  
Dear, I awoke with a pang in my heart  
And heard the sound of the rain.

### *Act Four*

Michigan Avenue streams with people —  
Ten years alter the avenue.  
It's April again, and there are dolphin  
Clouds at rest in a waste of blue.

## A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

A girl goes by with a spray of lilacs  
Pinned at her breast, and quick as thought  
Country fences, dogwood blossoms  
Over the granite scene are wrought.

You come in my mind ! It's spoiled by the glimpse  
Of a monster diamond that glints and glows ;  
A black-eyed Gadarene goes past  
Insolent, heavy, and hooked of nose.

I scan his face that runs with fat,  
And the fleshly sag of his under lip ;  
Then back to the diamond again, the hand  
Holds your arm with a master grip !

## THEODORE DREISER

Jack o' Lantern tall shouldered,  
One eye set higher than the other,  
Mouth cut like a scallop in a pie,  
Aslant showing powerful teeth.  
Swaying above the heads of others.  
Jubilant with fixed eyes, scarcely sparkling.  
Moving about rhythmically, exploding in laughter.  
Touching fingers together back and forth,  
Or toying with a handkerchief.  
And the eyes burn like a flame at the end of a funnel.  
And the ruddy face glows like a pumpkin  
On Halloween !

Or else a gargoye of bronze  
Turning suddenly to life  
And slipping suddenly down corners of stone  
To eat you :  
Full of questions, objections,  
Distinctions, instances.  
Contemptuous, ironical, remote,  
Cloudy, irreverent, ferocious,  
Fearless, grim, compassionate, yet hateful,

## THEODORE DREISER

Old, yet young, wise but virginal.  
To whom everything is new and strange :  
Whence he stares and wonders,  
Laughs, mocks, curses.  
Disordered, yet with a passion for order  
And classification — hence the habitual  
Folding into squares of a handkerchief.

Or else a well cultivated and fruitful valley,  
But behind it unexplored fastnesses,  
Gorges, precipices, and heights  
Over which thunder clouds hang,  
From which lightning falls,  
Stirring up terrible shapes of prey  
That slink about in the blackness.  
The silence of him is terrifying  
As if you sat before the sphinx.  
The look of his eyes makes tubes of the air  
Through which you are magnified and analyzed.  
He needs nothing of you and wants nothing.  
He is alone, but content,  
Self-mastered and beyond friendship,  
You could not hurt him.  
If he would allow himself to have a friend  
He could part from that friend forever  
And in a moment be lost in wonder  
Staring at a carved rooster on a doorstep,  
Or at an Italian woman

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Giving suck to a child  
On a seat in Washington Square.

Soul enwrapped demi-urge  
Walking the earth,  
Stalking Life !



## JOHN COWPER POWYS

Astronomer and biologist  
And chemical analyst and microscopist,  
Observer of men's involuted shells  
Where they conceal their hate and even their love  
Under insipid ooze or nacreous stuff.  
Tracer of criss-cross steps made when great hells  
Kept lime as soft as wax  
Which thereupon took the imprint of the air  
From gnat-like wings of joy or shadowy care.  
He makes hard secrets stand in the cul de sac's  
Entrance and face him till he lays all bare  
That eyes hold or heart of blood contains,  
And curious traits in diverse curious brains,  
And starved desires in hearts and hopes forgot  
Under the sifting ashes of one's lot.

X-ray photographer who flashes  
What's in you out of you with sudden crashes  
Of wit or oratory in a flood.  
He samples and tests the book's, also your blood.  
Shows what you are and whence you came,  
And who your kindred are, and what your flame  
In heat and color is. Poet and wag,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Prophet, magician taking from a bag  
Eggs, rabbits, silver globes; the old engram!  
Scoffer with reverence, visioned, quick to damn,  
Yet laugh at, looking keenly through the sham.  
Confessing his own sins, devoid of shame.  
He knows himself and laughs,  
Or blames himself as he would others blame.  
A naughty boy who kicks away the staff  
Which poor decrepits walk by, nearly blind,  
Then hurrying up with varied thought to find  
Medicinal clay with which dim eyes to heal.

What is the human secret but Proteus' ?  
And who can catch the old man but his kind ? .  
He was Poseidon's herdsman, knew the streams  
Of early being, sea-filled ponds and sluices,  
Where life took birth through elemental dreams.  
And Proteus glanced with lightning and divined  
The cause of Bacchus' madness. But at noon  
He counted his sea-calves and ocean-sheep  
On Carpathos where waters made a tune  
Following the Orphic sun out of the deep —  
Then in his cave he hid him, turned to sleep. . . .

So runs our life to change! and who can catch  
The Protean thought must watch,  
And be adept at wrestling, in the chase.  
And know the god whatever be his face,

## JOHN COWPER POWYS

Through roar of water where the porpoises  
And extravagant dolphins play, in silences  
Of noon or midnight. So John Cowper Powys  
You stand before us gesturing, shoulder bent  
A little like King Richard, frizzed of hair,  
Rolling your eye for secrets, for the word.  
The thresher of your mind is eloquent  
With hulls and flakes of words, until at last  
The kernel itself pops out, not long deferred. . . .

Here is our wrestler then,  
Hunter of secrets of creative souls.  
Eluded he may be, he tries again.  
His hand slips clutching at the irised shoals  
Of rapturous thought. And at times his eyes  
Are blinded by a light, or a disguise.  
But finally both eye and hand  
Obey the infallible senses' brave command —  
He catches Proteus then, and with a shout,  
The god shouts too, and we who watch the bout  
Join in the panic of their merriment!

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

She was a woman who even as a child  
Hungered for gifts with hunger passionate  
And in her childhood made a hard fate  
For a father who had failed and who was wild  
With a kind of laughing despair,  
That comes of having failed.

She had plain dresses, only a little strand  
Of coral beads, and ribbons for her hair  
Bestowed by grandmama. And on her hand  
A ring of beads that maddened her and paled  
Beside the gold rings other girls could show.  
So she grew up out of this woe  
Of wanting and not having things.  
And round this nucleus of desire  
Her nature wound itself into a spire,  
As a vine climbs up and clings  
Till it becomes the tree ;  
So she became all fire  
For the world's glittering glory.

Then in the process of her being's story  
She married a man of riches and took over  
Dresses and jewels, houses, with her lover.

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

And learned the ways of Paris and New York,  
And how to sit, or look, or use one's fork.  
And how to speak in French, and how to dress.  
And how to find and use the loveliness  
That gold brings. And she lived where thought is  
white

With its great longing for the infinite,  
Where pale youths dream and write,  
And starve and lie awake at night;  
Where sculpture, music and where painting is  
On priceless canvases.  
But none of this saw she  
In feeding her desire with jollity  
In the cafés and in society;  
Wherever the denials of her youth  
Could be made whole, or leveled up  
With idle splendor or the champagne cup.  
That was her dream of making her life truth,  
Till she devoured her husband like a leman —  
She was at last one of this kind of women.  
Then as a widow she came journeying back  
With trunks and maids upon a New Year's day  
Over her childhood's disappointed track.

Her father meanwhile had gone on the way  
Which was his at the start.  
His life was like a bruise which does not smart  
Now that it has grown hard.



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And he was stoical like one who hugs  
His inner self until sensation dies,  
Or dulls his fears or sorrows with strong drugs.  
There was a light of hardness in his eyes  
Through which no one could see his secret pain.  
Failure had made him so — he could explain  
To no one how he had been caught in life;  
Sometimes it seemed himself, sometimes his wife,  
And he had thought of it so much he lost  
Perspective of himself, therefore he kept  
Great silence, speaking little, even then  
But trivial things. He trod his path and slept,  
And rose to tread the path and slept again.  
He was resolved to pay the bitter cost  
And not cry out — his thinking stood on guard  
To this end chiefly.

With impassive heart  
He wrote his daughter on a postal card  
To come, if it should please her, and be home  
On Christmas, if she could, on New Year's day  
If she preferred, but anyway to come.

If a ghost could patch its tomb  
With a trowel from time to time,  
If it had a little lime,  
So as to stop the cracks and growing rifts,  
That would be like this man who hated gifts

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

Because he scarce could give them, and had patched  
With hardness where his heart had broken  
In years gone for the holidays when she  
Cried in such ignorance of his poverty.  
Now with walled feelings he could sit unspoken  
Of what he felt, regretted, or had lost —  
He was that kind of ghost.  
So when the daughter came he only had  
Her mother and the dinner, greetings glad,  
And certain pride because her life had matched  
With childhood's hopes — but still he had no gifts  
For Christmas or for New Year's, and the daughter  
Wept when she found it so, — 'twas always so, —  
It made her youthful bitterness alive.  
And so she spilled her water  
Out of a trembling hand at dinner and arose  
And left the table. But with specs on nose  
Self-mastered, not revealing  
What was his feeling,  
The father ate the dinner alone, while mother  
Was comforting the daughter.

“He might have given me a dollar, a little book,  
A handkerchief, or any other  
Little thing, he always acted so.”  
The mother tried to soothe her daughter's woe.  
But while they were together, the father took  
His steps up town and when the two came back

## THE GREAT VALLEY

They found him gone and the room growing black  
From falling night. . . .

But later he came in  
And sat by the fire all silent. This had been  
His New Year's day! And later his wife came  
And sat across him silent in her blame  
Of him and of his life.

She said at last :  
"Blanche is heart sick."

"Well, I am sixty-five,"  
He answered her, "and never while I'm alive  
Will I remember Christmas or a New Year's day.  
I'm glad so many of such days are past,  
They have been always this way. We had dinner  
And ourselves for her and she brought herself  
And nothing else. This is the way to win her  
Admiration, yet this thing of giving  
Dollars or books, wins only a little thrill  
Of tickled pride or egotism, still  
I might have done it, just to have the peace  
Of her self-satisfaction."

Said the wife :  
"You might find happiness in her happiness.  
The only thing you understand in living

## NEW YEAR'S DAY

Is how to stand your misery, one can guess  
The working of your thought."

Ere she could cease  
The daughter entered like the devil's elf,  
And saw her father bent before the fire,  
And saw the back of his head which spoke to her  
Of hardness, or of something that she hated  
Which moved her pity and her hate at once.

And then the mother said: "You two are fated  
To be as blind as two cliffs to each other.  
You need I think a spiritual re-birth,  
Something that you could have upon this earth.  
For I can see a book or handkerchief  
Would give one happiness and one relief  
From hardness which is girding in your soul.  
That would be rich return for small outlay,  
God give us all another New Year's day."

## PLAYING BLIND

You used to play at being blind —  
Now you are blind — you used to say :  
“Play I am blind and help me find  
Where the gate opens on the way.”

I laughed at you, we laughed together  
When you were playing blind, your staff  
My walking cane of varnished leather —  
Now you are blind and still you laugh.

You sit beneath the reading lamp  
With long lashed eyelids closed and pale  
And make me read you Riley's Tramp,  
And Grimm and many a fairy tale.

Sometimes I stop — you see I choke  
Before the tale is done by half —  
One's eyes blur from tobacco smoke —  
I cannot laugh now when you laugh.



## I SHALL NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN

If I could only see you again —  
If I could only see you again !  
How can it be  
I shall never see you again ?  
For the world has shown it can roll on its way  
And blot you out forever —  
And I shall never see you again !  
I thrill as one who slips on the edge of a gulf  
When I think I shall never see you again !

As a dead leaf is hurtled over the tops of trees ;  
As a dead leaf is dizzily driven through woodland  
valleys  
I am driven and tossed in the storms of living.  
But as the dead leaf escapes the breeze's fingers,  
And sinks till it nestles motionless under a rock  
So in quiet moments I dream  
Of you,  
I dream of all that you were —  
And I shall never see you again !

There never was any one like you !  
There never yet was such joy in a heart,

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Such strength to live whatever the fate,  
Such love to love,  
Such thought to see how life is good,  
Such maternal passion,  
Such breasts eager to nurse child after child —  
And I shall never see you again !

Your breasts were made to suckle conquerors,  
Warriors, prophets,  
Invincible souls  
Loving life, and loving death at last.  
And now your breasts are dust,  
You are all dust,  
You are lost save for my memory.

And this morning I woke  
As a leaf might wake in its sheltered place  
Under the rock  
Stirred by a breath of April.  
And I lived again the last time I saw you —  
The last visit !  
You were almost ninety then.  
But there was the old zest in your heart  
To do all things and have all things  
Unchanged, as I had known them  
As a boy.  
You gave me the same room,  
Nothing was changed,

## I SHALL NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN

Not a chair, a curtain, a picture.  
And you came up-stairs before it was day  
And lighted a fire in the little stove  
To have the room warm for me to dress in —  
There never was love like yours !

And I went down to the kitchen and found you  
Frying batter cakes, and laughing,  
And bringing back my boyhood days  
With the old stories.  
And how you kissed me, and hugged me  
With your withered arms !  
And then you sat down with me,  
And ate with me as of old,  
And brought out priceless jars of things  
Which you had made and saved for me !

The breath of memory stirs me  
Under the rock.  
I must have the madness of life to drive me,  
To toss me  
Into forgetfulness of my loss of you —  
For I shall never see you again !

ELIZABETH TO MONSIEUR D—

I pace the rooms and wait for John's return.  
My heart beats all too fast, I feel a pain  
Around my heart, my hands grow cold, I burn  
Through neck and cheeks. And thus I live in vain.  
John comes at last and says, "There is no mail,  
No letter for you." And with whirling brain  
I turn away in silence, growing pale,  
And whisper to myself: to be resigned  
To wretchedness perhaps is to prevail  
O'er wretchedness and win a peace of mind.  
To love you so, to thirst for you, to pay  
For outward calm with inner storms confined,  
To lie awake by night and spend the day  
In restless thoughts, is life too hard to bear.  
I see you in my troubled dreams alway,  
You face me with a grave and haughty air,  
Serene, incensed against me who intrude  
An interest which you have no heart to share.  
Forgive me then my sorrow's servitude,  
To write to you my suffering will ease,  
And fill the aching of my solitude.  
I have gone forth to Nature to find peace:

## ELIZABETH TO MONSIEUR D—

The woods are filled with purple lupine now,  
Small yellow asters, phlox, and cramoisies  
Of columbine and roses, vine and bough.  
The wild grape and the cherry haunt the dunes  
With odors sweet as love. To cool my brow  
I walk the heights upon these afternoons  
And watch the blue waste of the sky's descent.  
And yesterday where golden light festoons  
With flickering sorcery the way we went  
'Twixt sprays of beech and sassafras I stole  
Till once again at the hill's top half-spent  
I saw the shore dunes and the waters roll.  
We climbed it once together — it was there  
The Bacchic madness came into your soul  
To take me in your arms. And now I bear  
Your coldness, your reproaches, you who call  
My longing and my spiritual despair  
A mere neurosis, or hysterical  
Outcropping to be conquered. It was wrong  
To take me in your arms, and then when all  
Was not yours then to tell me to be strong,  
And urge your marriage vows now I have thought  
The problem of my love through. I belong  
To you Monsieur; whatever grief is wrought  
Of body or of soul to satisfy  
The flame is better, and is far less fraught  
With mad regret than it can be to lie  
In restless torture. O my friend withdraw



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Your friendship from me never lest I die!  
Yes, I could live and work if I foresaw  
Your friendship mine and letters by your hand  
Arriving in this lonely place to thaw  
The ice around my heart's flame. Understand  
From those I love but little love I need:  
Crumbs from your feast you scarce can countermand,  
And crumbs are all I ask, and just the meed  
Of friendly interest. I abase my pride.  
The strong can suffer silently and bleed  
As long as strength lasts, keep the blood inside,  
Until one weakens when it spurts and drips.  
And Pride turns Nature, careless now to hide  
The inner bleeding bubbling at the lips.  
I write you this without regret or shame.  
My strength has left me in the blue eclipse  
Of agony. Monsieur, I take the blame,  
If any come, of fanning dangerously  
The spark that brightened once and would be flame —  
Is that not true? Or do you say to me:  
"You are no more my pupil, I retrench  
"The memory of things that cease to be,  
"And go my way with teaching young girls French,  
"As I taught you. Two years have passed since then.  
"What is this thought that time has failed to quench?  
"You who are laureled in the world of men,  
"A genius risen like a morning star,  
"Does not that glory fill you?" Yet again

ELIZABETH TO MONSIEUR D—

I answer you one's genius burns afar  
In useless splendor if it warm no cheek,  
Make bright no eye, lead on no darkling spar —  
Genius is love, is freedom, it must speak,  
Work out its fate from egocentric life;  
It is more swift than other feet to seek  
Its ruin with its hope, or take the knife  
More willingly to breast than those who sink  
In involuted growth. To be your wife  
I do not dream, I only wish to drink  
The cup with you and break the bread with you,  
To feel thereby our lives are one and think  
We are one creed and one communion, new  
In spirit, born anew, that I may have  
An altar for my genius, something true  
And near in flesh to triumph for, or brave  
The world or evil for. Genius is love.  
It cannot bear itself alone to save;  
It must another rescue, it must prove  
Its growing strength in ministry. Monsieur,  
Bruise not my soul by ignorance hereof,  
My reverend father thinks my thoughts are pure —  
If he should read this! But if you dismiss  
This letter with a smile and say her cure  
Is the reaction of forbidden bliss,  
It is most true, but you would not degrade  
My love for you with that analysis,  
And that alone. For surely God who made

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Our souls and bodies so meant we should rise  
Through their desires, and does God pervade  
This glowing mass of life, these starry skies  
With other power? Now scorn me, if you will.  
The unburdened heart has tamed its agonies.

## MONSIEUR D— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

In time I'll tell you all the dreams I've had —  
But now — well, let me think! O yes three times  
I've dreamed a creature with a dragon's head,  
Which was her head as well, for so it seemed,  
Gemmed with her brazen eyes half luminous  
And half opaque, slate colored, lay across  
My breast and hurt my heart, and breathed her breath  
From half-dead, livid overlapping lips  
(As when you crush a snake's head jaws will lie  
Awry and out of plumb) like pestilence  
Right in my nostrils. This interpreted  
Means characters are breaths, and most are bad  
When closely known. Such breath suits well the  
    dragon,  
But would not suit her, so you'd think to see  
How fair her face, how seeming fair her soul.  
So let me tell you.

    All my hair is gray,  
My youth is gone, pretense will work no more.  
I'm fifty-seven, yet I cling to youth,  
Because I cling to love, have never known  
Aught but successions of immoderate — what?

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Some call it lust — you call it libido.  
Well it is urge, creative fire and drives  
The artist half-soul mad, as I am mad —  
Look how my poor hand trembles, my voice breaks —  
No! I'll go on. I'll tell you all, be done.  
Then if you cannot cure me, there's a balm  
I know myself.

If I had only loved

Elizabeth, who wrote me years ago  
Such pleading letters — every man can win  
Some woman's love completely, had she won  
My love as well! O what a monstrous world  
Where such envenomed fire is, held by Chance  
And shot in blindness. So she felt the flame  
And looked on me, I felt the flame and looked  
Upon this cockatrice.

So as I said

I had been teacher, actor, writer, poet,  
Had seen my face on lithographs, felt warm  
In every capillary for that face  
Which seemed star-guided, noble, to be loved,  
Revered, and thus through self-esteem I bore  
My failures hoping, buoyed by some success  
As the swift years went by.

But on a day

When I was forty-five, looked thirty-five,



## MONSIEUR D—— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

No gray hairs then, they called me thirty-five,  
My name went round the city, in the press  
They hailed me as a genius, I had played  
Othello to their liking, was yet young  
And promised much, they said. That afternoon  
A woman came to see me in my suite,  
Wonder and admiration in her eyes.  
Her manner halted, as she thumbed a book  
Upon the table, while she told her tale :  
She had won favor as an amateur,  
Could I, the greatest talked of man to-day,  
Show her the way to greatness, might it be  
A modest part could be assigned to her  
When I played mad Othello ?

I have found  
That when a woman has no business with you  
Her calling speaks the oldest one of all.  
So true to this I acted. We commenced  
And for three months I struggled for the prize.  
Her first play was to make me pity her.  
She told me of her suffering, her youth,  
(She was then thirty-five), her poverty,  
Her labor to learn French. And like a man  
I pitied her and opened up my purse.  
She said, "No! No! this hat and dress will do,  
It brushes well." She would not take a cent.  
I saw her daily for a month before

## THE GREAT VALLEY

I won her. Though she gave me hands and lips —  
There was a fury in her lips, my heart  
Seemed like to stop — I could not win the prize.  
One day she broke in tears: "You seemed so noble,  
So great of mind, are you then like the rest  
Who want a woman's body, nothing else?"  
"I want your love," I said, "your love for mine,  
I love you, dearest!" faugh, must I repeat  
The gagging words? So I declared the love  
I felt too deeply, and to prove my love  
I added: "I'll renounce the gift of love,  
My Lady Wonderful, worship you afar.  
You would not have me tortured by your eyes,  
Nor have me see you often, in this case!"  
So I had given love as I had given  
All wealth that I could pour of soul, achievement,  
Name in the world, all pride, all thought of self  
Present or future to this woman, now  
For love's sake I renounced the gift of love.  
And so I left her. Well, she called me back.  
And though I was a fool, and blinded too,  
I saw her thought and won her in an hour.  
So then commenced my madness, for she said  
It could not be again. The blood I tasted  
Could not be drunk. "You love me," she would say,  
"Then bring me not to shame, it will be known  
If we go on. I cannot lose my bread.  
Librarians cannot have their names in doubt

## MONSIEUR D— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

Who serve the public, as I do." So it was  
The madness braced my will, and unrelenting  
I sought her, won her. In a little while  
We were adjusted to habitual love.  
And I was happy save when I was mad.  
For she knew younger men who came to call,  
Or take her to the theatre, with one  
She corresponded. "Let it be," she said,  
"I must not be in public with you, dear,  
Whose name and greatness in the world would point  
To our relationship, how could it be  
You would be with a woman without station,  
Celebrity or wealth, except for this?  
These others are a blind."

I could not solve  
Out of the whirling clouds of passion truth —  
My days were tortured, in the dreams of sleep  
I saw this dragon head I told you of.  
And so through heavy vengery, and dread,  
And anger, doubt, faith, love and much of hate,  
I took to drink.

So drinking with her once,  
For she could drink me blind, I turned and said:  
"You say I am the first, I think you lie."  
She wailed a flood of tears. A hundred eyes  
Turned on us in the café where we sat.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

We left and walked the park. I goaded her,  
Pried out the secret. Why, at twenty-three  
She had become the mistress of a man.  
It ended just six months before she came  
To see me in my suite.

Now here I was :  
To hold on to myself I had to hold  
This woman, win her wholly, crush her soul,  
Destroy her so she would no longer be  
My heart's desire. For I had given all.  
And I could see she valued it the less  
As time went on. My name, what was it now ?  
My art, what was it now ? She even hinted  
I could not act Othello. There was nothing  
I could do more to keep her, hold her love,  
Her admiration. O how good esteem  
Seems to a man who forfeits it to her  
Whose body he can have, who cannot have  
That sympathy whereby a man is nerved  
To daily work and living. What is Art ?  
No picture would be painted, poem sung  
Save for the thought that woman close at hand,  
Or somewhere in the world yet to be found  
By reason of the picture or the poem,  
Will see and love you for it.

Let me say .  
In passing, and dismiss it, I began

## MONSIEUR D—— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

With little sums until I gave her much.  
There's matter of more moment.

I confess,  
In spite of my licentious life, the creed  
One sees among the artists, where I've lived,  
To strong belief in woman's virtue, yes,  
In spite of lip avowal of the faith  
Of love called free, I have not quite believed it.  
But it was in her soul. She sucked that milk,  
A child upon her mother's breast, she said —  
It all came out at last from many talks,  
And then, just then, I thought I saw foreshadowed  
A social change upon the things of sex :  
We read together Ann Veronica,  
And Bernard Shaw, and laughed and said, at last  
We see each other clearly. We have found  
A footing for our life. I slept at last.  
The dragon vanished from my dreams. I waked  
A song upon my lips, left drink alone,  
Could face my image in the looking-glass,  
And find restored a noble quality,  
A strength and genius.

But if love be free  
And if you love though only for an hour  
Why not the cup of love? Her former friend  
Piqued to an interest by my love for her



## THE GREAT VALLEY

Came back to see if he had overlooked  
A beauty he would have. Well, she confessed  
Their night together. It was at the time  
My poor canzones which sang our stormy love  
Had just been finished. Every artist fool  
Writes sonnets or canzones once in his life.  
And so I had to add a verse to tell  
Her faithlessness — or was it faithlessness?  
Since she declared she loved me, did not love  
This older friend. But if she did not love him  
What was this act? She called it just a trial  
Of our love which had stood the test, O God  
Such mazes for my soul!

Flushed then with wrath  
And drink I beat her cruelly. She stood  
With scarce a cry of pain and let me strike,  
And said if I considered it was just  
To beat her so, she wished to bear the pain.  
Then with a cry I ceased. We fell asleep  
Stretched on the bed together. When we woke  
She kissed me her forgiveness. I returned  
The kiss, ah me!

So now the story turns.  
There was a woman critic who pursued  
My work with hateful words. Before I knew  
The cockatrice I found it best to fold

## MONSIEUR D— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

This critic's column under, never read.  
And in a day or two from that on which  
I beat my mistress, what should I behold? —  
A letter from her — she had left the town  
Without my knowing, she was visiting  
This critic enemy at her summer home.  
And in this mail I found my poor canzones  
Returned to me, and in the letter this:  
"My friend says for some reason you would try  
To compromise me by this wretched verse,  
So I return it to you, go and burn.  
I shall not see you more — so she advises,  
And so I think. I wish you well no less.  
You are a little old to rise to fame,  
Or excellence in acting, yet go on.  
Perhaps there is not aught beside to do,  
And it will occupy your mind, good-bye."

So shortly everywhere I seemed to sense  
The feeling that they deemed me foul and base.  
While we were friends I made her known to artists,  
And writers in the city. With this start  
She had gone on and multiplied her friends  
Among this folk. I saw it all at once  
As one sees dawn from darkness. Then  
The social standard melted, gave away  
To all that had been written for some years.  
Free love had won at last. And we who kept

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Our love in hiding, she who lied to keep  
Her name as one who lived a maiden's life,  
And I who doubted, hated her because  
She was not freshly mine, we, she and I,  
Stepped to a world all new, she to enjoy  
And I to perish. I was weak from loss  
Of blood from wounds she gave me, spent for love  
Poured for her sorrow, for she grieved and wept  
That I was not her early love, her love  
At love's beginning. I went here and there  
To build her life up, make it rich, repair  
The injuries of her youth, retrieve the days  
Which had brought loneliness. Forbear with me —  
I thought I could tell all in just a word —  
Yes, this is it — She learned what was my strength  
And took it for her own, found out my faults  
And struck me there. She gave me confidence  
And trust, I fancied. On analysis  
She had concealed herself, there had not been  
Clear understanding with us. So she took  
My friends, and friends are never wholly friends,  
And made them hers, through these made other friends,  
Explored my havens, my alliances,  
My secret powers of prestige in the world.  
And I awoke to find the world my foe!  
And every desk of every editor  
Silent for knowledge of me, breaking silence  
In just a word of hate. You see she loosed

MONSIEUR D—— TO THE PSYCHOANALYST

This story like a mist which creeps through cracks  
That I had compromised her. Then behold  
I who had helped to bring this era in  
Of sex equality, yes, in spite of all,  
My ingrained feelings I have spoken of,  
Found myself robbed of her by just the creed  
I had upheld, and saw her live with him  
Who was her friend, before I knew her, yes,  
And justified by those whom she had feared,  
Because they hated me, and pitied him  
Bound to a woman in a loveless life  
Who would not free him, let him marry her.

Then the last atom of my strength I summoned  
To play Othello. It was death or life!  
Soul triumph or soul ruin. But you see  
The cockatrice had sent the word around  
And sharpened every critic eye. I faced  
An audience of one mind, could sense it all  
Where hatred, mild amusement were well mixed  
To poison, paralyze creative power,  
And even break my memory. But I said  
Show now your genius, drink the hatred in  
Till all your spirit sparkles as a star  
When the north wind of winter blows at night.  
Nothing opposes but a woman's hate.  
Rise on its wreckage. So I spurred myself.  
And even when I saw her critic friend

## THE GREAT VALLEY

Limned from the mass of faces, lost my clue  
And waited for the prompter, then my rage  
Upheld me — yes, but wait — the rest is brief.

I had not acted through the strangle scene  
When I heard calls and bells, the curtain fell,  
My understudy led me from the stage.  
Out in the night we went — I knew not where —  
It was a night of drink, and I awoke  
To strange surroundings in a scented room,  
A woman with light hair lay by my side  
“How did I get here” — then the woman laughed —  
She was a Fury, for the Furies had me.  
Out of the house I ran, from place to place,  
All day went wandering in the city, thus  
My wanderings of ten years began, they seem  
Ten centuries. What do you think of this?  
I’m fifty-seven, with a bad complex,  
Can you unravel it and make me well?



## THE LAST CONFESSION

Dear, if you knew how my poor heart  
Aches for your heart by day and night —  
Forever lost to life's delight,  
As seasons pass and years depart,  
You would not let the invisible flame  
Of hatred sear and scar your soul,  
Where once in living light my name  
Was lettered like an aureole!

You, who lost faith in me, will not  
Believe this last confession, made  
To lift your spirit from the shade  
Wherein it walks and views the spot  
Of my offense. But when I saw  
That our love's life must have an end,  
I looked back o'er our path with awe  
And traced it toward us to the sign  
Where our ways severed, yours and mine.  
There stood Remorse's dreaded shape!  
Your Disbelief! Your Self-Contempt!  
I saw our love was not exempt  
From ruin and could not escape.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

We could not separate and smile,  
And keep a faithful thought the while  
Of understanding (like a spring  
Hidden, refreshing, murmuring)  
As friend sometimes takes leave of friend.  
Then what was left? It was this thought  
That at the last came forth to slay  
Your love, without a warning brought  
Ere my lips tightened to betray!

For as our love found depths too deep;  
As absence almost deadened sense;  
As often I awoke from sleep  
And looked for hours at you, all tense,  
Lest you awake and see my eyes,  
Where the one thought of purest love  
Shone like a fixed star's paradise,  
I learned to know that Self above —  
Making the heart's hierarchy pure —  
Stands the archangel Truth, preferred —  
Throned over Love which can endure  
Only where Truth has stood, unstirred.  
Watchful and with his torch of stars  
Held o'er Love's face, although it shows  
The forehead's pain, the bosom's scars,  
The cheeks bleached out from secret tears  
In memory of impalpable blows,  
Shed in the night's long solitude.

## THE LAST CONFESSION

You see I could not give you truth !  
There was the Shadow in my life  
Cast by the fierce Sun of my youth.  
And as our day fell to the west  
The Shadow lengthened and the strife  
'Twixt Love and Truth within my breast  
Waxed fiercer. Heaven's deathless blue  
Leaned on my hungering soul and pained  
Its wings, as if a joy were lost,  
Or never had been quite attained,  
Or captured at too great a cost.  
I could not give you truth all true.  
My love for you and then the thirst  
For all your love, made me accursed  
Of fear that if you knew me first,  
Just as I am, your heart would cease  
To cherish mine. And then much more  
Was this fear venom to my peace  
When all the world spread out before  
Our astonished eyes, as our own world,  
And we its children, each for each.

This was the sleepless worm which curled  
In my heart's petals, at the root '  
Where my heart's sweetness had its source.  
You never saw the worm ! My speech  
Poised like a bee who knows the loot  
Of honey's gone, and turns his course.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

I kept the petals closed, and you  
Breathed at their tips, but would have known  
All of their fragrance, or of blight.  
That's love — to have no place where light  
And understanding have not shone.  
Your face reproached me — I who knew  
No sweet or bitter essences  
Can be withheld from Love that keeps  
An onward flight, which ever sees,  
Or would see, all in the heart's deeps.

Then Life came, and with lifted sword  
Laid on our souls his dread command;  
"Say your farewells, part hand from hand,  
You the adorer, and adored.  
Duty is seeking you! And Grief  
Would have her child return and see  
The changeless halls of Misery,  
And the bare board and darkened hearth."  
I reeled with anguish as the earth  
Sank from my feet. For oh the end  
Seemed far as death! And when it came  
It was my hope, my soul's desire  
To part as friend may part from friend,  
And that you'd keep alive my name  
Bright as an altar's quenchless fire.  
It could not be! How could it be?  
I was not truth! I was not true —

## THE LAST CONFESSION

I kept my soul's real self from you.  
Then I bethought me: "Since his earth  
Is Autumn-stricken with a doubt  
That I am worth not his love's worth,  
Were it no better he should know  
Disloyalty made definite  
By a suspected past re-knit,  
And see our love a play played out,  
Than to live through the soft decline  
Of our bright day to solemn eve —  
A sunset of remembrance — where  
He walks devoured by love and hate —  
Love for the love I strove to give,  
Hate for a thought intuitive:  
Some newer love her heart hath won  
Or some first love hath won her back.  
No, to my faith, he says, "I'll cleave,  
Believing that I can't believe."  
"Slow death to love! Exquisite rack!"  
Ah me! I had not made this fate —  
The warp was stretched, the woof was spun,  
The roof-tree laid long years before  
You entered at the unbolted door.  
"Then what is best? What can be done?  
To give him back his pride and strength,  
And even his peace of mind at length?  
Better a quick blow! Better blood!  
To brace the soul and poise the brain



## THE GREAT VALLEY

And make him what he was again."  
Just then the Shadow near me stood  
Who stepped aside for you. He took  
With unabated comradeship  
My hand in his. That closed our book.  
I woke to hear the water drip  
Blown out of heavens low and dim.  
He brushed my tears off with his hand —  
Nor clouds nor memory trouble him.  
And my one thought of you was this :  
I've cured you with this sacrifice —  
The hate has come to you I planned.  
The hate that may take form in words,  
For scorn like this : "I found a seam  
"Right at the contact of our love.  
"No recreative fire can warm  
"And fuse fine gold with lifeless dross,  
"Or worthy metal make thereof."  
This killed your love and wrecked your dream !  
This is my soul's confession. Wait,  
A trickster in a hooded form  
Stands by as we begin to pull  
The weaving beam, and throws between  
The warp and woof a ball of wool.  
It catches and is woven in  
The colors, spoils the conscious blend,  
Changes the pattern to the end.  
Whatever it be I call it fate.

## THE LAST CONFESSION

In misery or in happiness  
We must live on awhile no less.  
Shall we be master weavers, climb,  
Or leave the loom, or waste the time?  
Or guide the shuttle till the threads  
Weave clear or turn to worthless shreds?

## IN THE LOGGIA

There were seven nights of the moon  
This August, beloved.  
There were nights before the seven  
When we scarcely saw the moon,  
Or perhaps as we canoed, ere the sun sank,  
We saw her as a transparent tissue of white  
Against a sky as white.  
But when we first saw the moon  
She had risen before the sun had sunk.  
Then the next night she was brighter  
With the evening planet above her,  
Despite the tongues of fire in the west  
Where the sun had set on fire  
Great coils of cloud !  
And then there were those nights between  
Her growth and her o'erflowing fullness  
When hand in hand we walked in your garden  
Amid the Chinese balloons and coreopsis,  
Hibiscus, marigold, hydrangeas,  
Under the rose arches,  
And by the hedge of California privet,  
And looked at the lake,

## IN THE LOGGIA

And the moon in the sky  
And the moon on the lake.

And do you remember what we saw  
As we stared at the wake of the moon  
On the lake?  
The ripples made blacknesses,  
And the moon made silver splendors,  
And as we stared we saw  
In the shadows of waves  
Running into the light of the moon on the water  
Youths and maids and children  
Coming from darkness into the light in a dance,  
Joining hands, falling into embraces,  
Hurrying to evanishment at the path of light  
Where the moon had paved the water.  
I shall never see the moon on the water  
Without seeing these youths and maids and children,  
And without thinking of that night  
Of the full moon!

This was the night  
We saw the moon rise, from the very first,  
Across the lake o'ertopping the forest.  
A spire of pine stood up  
Against a sky made pale as of the northern lights.  
But in a moment a bit of fire lit the spire of the pine  
As it were a candle lighted.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

And she rose so fast that I took my watch  
To time the rising of the moon  
Free and clear of the spire.  
And she rose so fast that as we gazed  
She cleared the spire,  
And soared with such silent glory above the forest,  
And sailed to the southwest of the spire.  
And at that moment the whippoorwills  
Began to sing in the woodlands near —  
We had not heard them before in all this summer.  
And we stood in the loggia  
In the silence of our own thoughts,  
In the silence of the full moon !

And it was then that the pressure of your hand  
Gave me a meaning of sorrow.  
It was then that the pressure of your hand  
Spoke, as flame which turns in the wind,  
Of a change in your heart.  
But if not a change, of another's heart  
Toward whom you turned.

And I sit in the loggia to-night  
Waiting for the moon to rise,  
She will not rise till midnight,  
And then she will rise, a poor half wreck of herself.  
No whippoorwill has sung to-night,  
And none will sing.



## IN THE LOGGIA

And if there are youths and maids and children  
Hurrying into the dance on the water,  
Embracing and fading in light,  
I shall not see.

No, in this darkness where I breathe  
The scent of the sweet alyssum  
Which you planted and tended  
I shall wait for midnight,  
And the rise of our ruined moon.

In the darkness of the loggia  
Under a sky that hopes for no moon to-night,  
Save the wasted moon of midnight,  
I am filled with a deep happiness  
And a thankfulness to the Power  
Behind the sky :  
I am filled with a joy as wide and deep as nature  
That my love for you  
Can live without your love for me,  
And asks nothing of you,  
And nothing for you  
Save that you find what you seek !

## BE WITH ME THROUGH THE SPRING

The snow has passed, the crocus blooms,  
A swelling tide of life returns;  
Green lights invade the forest glooms,  
All nature wakes and yearns.  
The breeze lifts and the ships take wing  
To havens which we long have known;  
And yet — and yet I dread the spring,  
For fear you may be gone.

Life gives us sweet delights and then  
Gathers them back and buries them deep. .  
Oh, wanton hearts, that kill them when  
They do not tire or sleep.  
The breeze lifts and the ships take wing —  
Be with me through the spring.

## DESOLATE SCYTHIA

*Χθονὸς μὲν ἐς τηλουρὸν ἤκομεν πέδον. — AES.*

When there are no distances in music,  
No far off things suggested of faery forests or celestial  
heights ;  
When nothing undiscovered stands back of the written  
page,  
And the landscape contains nothing hidden,  
And no alluring spirits of further places ;  
When no more in eyes shines the light of mystery,  
And the thrill of discovered kinships  
Has fallen into the familiar recognition  
That takes all men and women  
As daily associates of an accustomed world,  
Then you have come to the uttermost plain of earth  
Where lie the rocks of desolate Scythia.

## THE SEARCH

When the hill grows green at midway time,  
And bronze buds toss in the lane  
It is sweet to follow the river swallow  
Where the tiles are red from rain.

When the slanting wind shakes apple blossoms,  
And the willow trees are bowed  
The balcony banners flutter up  
Where sails the hilltop cloud.

The balcony banners are ever the same  
Wherever the heart may stray;  
One sports the tiger and one the dragon  
Whether you weep or play.

Where Little Boy Blue and the Knave of Hearts  
And the Goose Girl dance on the green;  
Where Knights in red and gold ride forth  
Guarding the King and Queen;

Where the glint of swords is the only light  
On a passing storm of men;  
Or where the Furies rocking wait  
For the world to die again;

## THE SEARCH

Where horsemen ride by the winding river  
Gallop in the quest :  
One wears black and one wears yellow,  
And one in red is dressed.

One fares in the flaunt of a scholar's cloak,  
And a velvet hat and plume ;  
Two ride with eyes fixed on the ground,  
And one with a face of gloom.

One laughs at the others and laughs at himself,  
Two think of themselves alone ;  
One sees a goal for his thirsting soul,  
And life as a stepping stone.

They pass through a village where  
Some boys are flying kites.  
The people come with food and wine  
To entertain the Knights.

And one takes bread and one takes cake,  
Three drink a little wine.  
And two drink for their heart's delight,  
And one for an anodyne.

And the Knight in red slips off to a tavern  
And drinks him deep and strong,  
And then he hurries to catch his fellows  
And hails them with a song.



## THE GREAT VALLEY

They come to a village that lay  
Within a King's domains :  
The Knight in yellow takes his sword  
And strikes away the chains.

They come to a place of festival  
Through which there passed a hearse :  
The Knight in black reins in his steed  
To look thereon and curse.

They come to a hall of curious books  
Under a mountain peak :  
The Knight in the scholar's cloak goes in  
And talks with them in Greek.

And all the way by the winding river  
By heaven's breeze unfurled  
The tiger banner and dragon banner  
Flutter around the world.

As night drew down they come to a palace  
Of laughter, lights and din.  
Says the Knight in red, "I tarry here,  
For I hear the violin."

"Nay," says the Knight in yellow dressed ;  
"Nay," says the Knight in black ;  
"Nay," says the scholar, "I sleep in the open  
To study the Zodiac."

## THE SEARCH

Out comes to them an equerry  
And sees their piteous dole :  
“Come in,” says the ruddy equerry,  
“And dine with Old King Cole.”

He seized their horses ere they could turn  
And led them where candles shone,  
And there with a crown tipped on his head  
Sat the monarch on his throne.

“What is your name, all yellow dight,  
And where does your sovereign reign ?”  
The sorrowful Knight then answered the King :  
“I’m traveling back to Spain.”

“What is your name, all dressed in black,  
And whither do you roam ?”  
“I was a mad prince they sent to England  
And now I’m going home.”

“What is your name, in a scholar’s cloak,  
And what is your heart’s joy ?”  
“I search through Europe night and day  
For a spouse for Helen of Troy.”

“They’re as mad as hatters,” said King Cole  
As he straightened his crown on his head.  
“Go call in the fiddlers, bring my bowl,  
Fetch me my pipe,” he said.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

"But hold," said Cole, "who are you, fellow,  
"Now answer me fair and well?"  
"I was born in France," said the Knight in red,  
"And my name's Pantagruel."

"That's a good name," laughed old King Cole.  
"But whither are you bound?"  
"I search for the Holy Bottle, King,  
"And I pray it may be found."

"That's a true answer," said Old King Cole,  
"And here you shall abide;  
"Come up to my throne and reign forever,  
"And sit you by my side."

"Away with the rest," said Old King Cole,  
"And fetch my bowl," said he.  
"Here is Pantagruel found at last,  
"To keep me company."

From under the throne he drew the bottle  
And poured wine into the bowl;  
Pantagruel stepped to the dais  
And drank with Old King Cole.

"Give yellow and black and scholar's cloak  
A bed in the royal room."  
But Old King Cole and Pantagruel  
Drank till the morning's bloom.

## THE SEARCH

They laughed and drank till the dawn was red,  
While the sleepers prayed and wept.  
They sang to the violins till day,  
While black and yellow slept.

But Old King Cole, the merry old soul,  
Was a curious soul as well :  
"Who are these fellows," queried he  
Of his friend Pantagruel.

"Well, never ask me," said Pantagruel,  
"I met them down by the river ;  
"But whether they came from the Land of Lanterns  
"They're traveling on forever."

They went to the room with a candle light  
And looked in the face of the three —  
"They're a sorry lot," said Old King Cole ;  
"They're a sorry lot," said he.

They held the candle to gray beard's face,  
And gray beard moaned in his rest.  
And pricked in color of India ink  
Was a windmill on his breast.

The other muttered "Life is a shadow,"  
And his face was young and pale :  
And pricked on his arm was a green serpent  
Devouring its own tail.

## THE GREAT VALLEY

The other sighed: "I still must struggle  
And strive until I die."  
And over his heart was pricked the shape  
Of a wingéd butterfly.

"What do I see," said Old King Cole,  
"Has the wine gone into my brain?  
"Who's Helen of Troy? Who'd leave England?  
"And who'd return to Spain?"

Pantagruel and Old King Cole  
Slip down the stairs in stealth,  
They fill the bowl from the Holy Bottle  
And drink each other's health.

They stand at the window to watch the sun  
And the mists of morning clear:  
Three knights on horses climb the hill,  
And silently disappear.

And yellow and black and scholar's cloak  
Into the light have gone;  
And the tiger banner and dragon banner  
Flutter against the dawn.

There's the dragon banner," says Old King Cole,  
"And the tiger banner," he sighs.  
Pantagruel breaks into a laugh,  
As the monarch dries his eyes.



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